



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

**Proust and China:
Translation, Intertext, Transcultural Dialogue**

Shuangyi Li

PhD in French

The University of Edinburgh

2015

Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Signature:

Date: 31.08.2015

Shuangyi Li

Abstract

The thesis primarily engages with Proust and China from the following three aspects: the Chinese translations and retranslations of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, contemporary mainland Chinese writers' intertextual engagement with Proust, and the transcultural dialogue between Proust and the Franco-Chinese author, François Cheng. Part I Chapter I compares and contrasts different – integral and selective – Chinese translations of *La Recherche*, and explores their different emphases as well as negligence of Proustian themes, e.g. time and memory over anti-Semitism and homosexuality, due to the former's strong resonance with Chinese philosophical and aesthetic traditions. The chapter is further substantiated by a close examination of various strategies employed to translate passages on sadomasochism and homosexuality in Proust's work, which reflect changing discourses on and attitudes to the subjects in China. Chapter II focuses on the creative reception of Proust's work in China. It explores how three mainland Chinese writers' intertextual engagement with Proust is influenced by the first integral translation of *La Recherche*, and how they cite Proust partly to enhance the cultural prestige of their own works, while creating a horizon of expectations and a favourable climate of reception of Proust's work in China. With a shift of focus to the Chinese diaspora in France, Part II explores Cheng's French-language novel *Le Dit de Tianyi* as the author's intellectual and artistic dialogue with Proust's work. In addition to the intertextual relations, this part particularly examines Cheng's conceptual and structural engagement with Proust's novelistic conceptions of *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*, his approach to the fine arts, and finally his use of mythological motifs.

Through the case of Proust, the thesis tries to gain a better understanding of the interaction between literatures and cultures, and particularly, the phenomena of cultural appropriation and dialogue in literature. More specifically, it demonstrates how the cultural heritages of China and the West can be re-negotiated, re-thought, and put into dialogue through the fictional and creative medium of literature.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	6
List of Abbreviations	7
Introduction	8
Part I.....	25
The Reception of Proust in China.....	25
Chapter I.....	26
Proust and the Chinese Translations	26
I.1. Proust in China: An Ideological Trajectory.....	26
I.2. Proust in Chinese Translations: An Overview	31
I.3. <i>First Translation</i>	33
I.4. Xu's Translation.....	36
I.5. Zhou's Translation.....	41
I.6. Zhou's Other Translations of <i>La Recherche</i>	45
I.7. Shen Zhiming's <i>Essential Selection</i>	55
I.8. Translating Montjouvain: A Case Study	59
I.9. Sexuality in Translation: Montjouvain and Beyond	67
I.9.1. Translating Sadomasochism.....	72
I.9.2. Translating Homosexuality.....	77
Chapter II.....	86
Proust and Mainland Chinese Writers: <i>La Recherche</i> and Its Postmodern Hypertexts.....	86
II.1. Introduction	86
II.2. Wang Xiaobo's 'Fleeting Years as Water' (' <i>Si shui liu nian</i> ', 似水流年) (1992)	89
II.3. Yu Hua's <i>Cris dans la bruine</i> (<i>Zai xiyu zhong huhan</i> , 在细雨中呼喊) (1991)	95
II.3.1. Prefaces.....	95
II.3.2. Prologue to <i>Cris</i>	106
II.4. Wei Hui's Short Stories	111
II.5. Conclusion	123

Part II.....	129
Proust in the Chinese Diaspora: François Cheng's <i>Le Dit de Tianyi</i>	129
I.1. Introduction	130
I.2. 'A la recherche du temps à venir'	133
I.3. Proust in Paratexts	142
II. Traits chinois / démarche proustienne	154
II.1. Artistic Initiation.....	155
II.2. Principles of Artistic Creation.....	167
II.3. Primacy of Art	176
II.3.1. Painting	178
II.3.2. Literature.....	185
II.3.3. Theatre	189
II.3.4. Music.....	193
II.4. Writing and Rewriting the Myth	199
II.4.1. Prologue	201
II.4.2. Myth of Orpheus.....	208
III. Transcendence through the Void.....	220
Conclusion.....	224
Bibliography	233

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Prof. Marion Schmid for inspiring my PhD. However, my much deeper sense of gratitude must be expressed for her being the constant reader of my emotions, thoughts and intellectual works since my undergraduate years. Her meticulous, insightful and invigorating comments and suggestions, complete dedication, infinite patience and indefatigable intellectual energy will no doubt continue to inspire me as a young scholar in the years to come. I must also thank my secondary supervisor Prof. Joachim Gentz who has carefully guided me through the areas of traditional and modern Chinese thought as well as contemporary Chinese fiction, which were almost entirely new to me at the beginning of the revised project.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Linwen and Wei Li (李林文, 李伟), who have supported me unconditionally all these years for something they could only dream of receiving when they were young, a university education; to my sisiter Xia Li (李霞), who is kindly taking over our family business so that I can commit myself to my academic pursuit; and finally, to Maram, whose 'intellectual fetish' compelled him to suggest that I should do a PhD even before I started my first degree.

List of Abbreviations

To reduce the use of footnotes the following abbreviations of primary texts have at times been adopted in the thesis. Full publication details of the editions cited can be found in the bibliography.

<i>La Recherche</i>	<i>A la recherche du temps perdu</i>
<i>RTP I-IV</i>	The new Pléiade edition of <i>La Recherche</i> (1987-1989) in four volumes
<i>First Translation I-III</i>	The first integral Chinese translation of <i>La Recherche</i> (1989-1991).
<i>Essential Selection</i>	The abridged Chinese translation of <i>La Recherche</i> (1992) by Shen
Xu's Translation	A new individual translation of <i>La Recherche</i> by Xu (2005-)
Zhou's Translation	A new individual translation of <i>La Recherche</i> by Zhou (2004-)
<i>Cris</i>	<i>Cris dans la bruine</i> (Yu)
<i>Le Dit</i>	<i>Le Dit de Tianyi</i> (Cheng)

I need to add a special note on the use of capitalization for Chinese surnames as well as their order of appearance in relation to first names. According to the Chinese convention, surnames are usually placed *in front of* first names. However, some Chinese authors have chosen to present their names in the Western convention (i.e. first name followed by surname). In some cases, this choice reflects the authors' insistence on or attitudes to their Chinese or Western identities and readerships, which is why I have kept the original order of appearance of their names in this thesis (e.g. François CHENG, Yinde ZHANG and GAO Xingjian). To avoid confusion, I have capitalized the Chinese surnames at their first appearances.

Introduction

Proust never visited China in his lifetime, nor did he write substantially on China. What the present thesis has embarked on is a strictly *literary* journey of his work there and back by means of translation, intertextual engagement, and the creation of a transcultural dialogue through literature. Compared to other Far Eastern countries such as Japan and Korea, where Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* was translated respectively between 1953 and 1955 and between 1970 and 1977, Proust's work has galvanized researchers, though much belatedly, working both within and outside French studies in China into intense scrutiny over the past three decades. These researchers have launched their rather urgent attempts to recuperate the foreign canon, which had not yet received its merited national recognition mainly because of its ideological contradiction to the 'socialist realism' that dominated art and literature in Mao's China between 1949 and 1976. The first integral Chinese translation of *La Recherche*, based on the old Pléiade edition (1954), was a collaborative work among fifteen scholars, published between 1989 and 1991,¹ more than seventy years after the original publication of *Du côté de chez Swann*. This sudden explosion of interest in Proust has been partly reflected in the ongoing translation of Western academic as well as popular books on Proust, ranging from Samuel Beckett's *Proust* (1930), Gilles Deleuze's *Proust et les signes* (1964), J.-Y. Tadié's *Proust et le roman* (1971) and Gérard Genette's *Figures III* (1972) to Alain de Botton's *How Proust Can Change your Life* (1997) and Maryanne Wolf's *Proust and the Squid* (2008). An enhanced interest in Proust, together with the more recent publication of the Flammarion (1984-1987) and the new Pléiade (1987-1989) editions of Proust's work in France as well as numerable flaws in

¹ This translation will be referred to as the *First Translation*. Full publication details can be found in 'Works by Proust and Their Translations' in the bibliography.

the *First Translation*, finally necessitated new translations: since 2000, two Chinese publishing houses have commissioned two competing new individual translations of *La Recherche*, the first volumes of which appeared respectively in 2004 and 2005.² In addition, other translation projects have taken place in the meantime. These include an abridged edition of *Du côté de chez Swann*, a very bold ‘essential selection’ which condenses *La Recherche* into one single volume (1992), and the translations of Proust’s other works such as *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1992) and a selection of Proust’s miscellaneous essays and novelistic writings (1999).³ While bringing back ‘a cultural other’, literary translation is almost always conditioned by ‘agendas in the receiving situation, cultural, economic, political’.⁴ Why were Proust’s works translated into Chinese so late? Why are they being translated and re-translated so intensively merely a decade later? How have they been received? These questions signal the starting point of our investigation.

Similar to the Chinese translation of Proust’s works, Proust studies did not properly commence in mainland China until the 1980’s.⁵ A few years after the economic reform and opening up of China, Proust was primarily reintroduced as a European Modernist or proto-Modernist writer of ‘stream-of-consciousness’ – however debatable the latter term may sound to us today when applying to Proust’s work – along with Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. The critical interest in Proust’s work throughout the 1980’s was thus preoccupied

² One translated by ZHOU Kexi (2004), and the other by XU Hejin (2005). See the bibliography.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 14.

⁵ Proust was briefly introduced prior to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Yinde ZHANG observes that Proust’s name appeared five times in the influential Shanghai-based literary journal *Xiandai* (subtitled in French ‘Les Contemporains’) between 1932 and 1935, without however generating much interest. This journal was primarily dedicated to the introduction and reception of foreign literature. See Yinde Zhang, *Le Monde romanesque chinois au XX^e siècle. Modernité et identité* (Paris: Champion, 2003), p. 17; p. 35.

with the literary style of ‘stream-of-consciousness’ as well as the application of psychoanalytic theory in literary studies.⁶

Of course, the publication of the *First Translation* itself constitutes a major achievement of Proust studies in China at the beginning of the 1990’s. But perhaps more *critically* significant are the two prefaces included in this integral translation, one translated from André Maurois’s French preface to the old Pléiade edition of *La Recherche*, the other written by the Chinese scholar LUO Dagang. Maurois defines the two major themes of *La Recherche* as ‘time’ and ‘memory’. While supplying more biographical details such as Proust’s poor health and eventual retreat from society life, especially in relation to Proust’s literary vocation, Luo additionally gives an overview of Proust’s place in French literary history since Montaigne and Balzac and compares – albeit rather sweepingly – Proust’s work to the classic Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (mid-18th century). The critical issues outlined in these two prefaces have become a ruling passion in the Chinese academic and – to an even greater extent – Chinese creative writers’ receptions of Proust from the 1990’s until today.⁷ Despite the increasingly diversified approaches to Proust’s work in China in the past decade or so, time and memory have still stood out as the most developed areas of scholarly enquiry, and Chinese Proustians also demonstrate strong recourse to Chinese conceptual tools, bringing ‘Chinese critical features’ to the world of Proust studies. A long line of Chinese aesthetic and philosophical traditions provide capacious room to accommodate Proustian time and memory, as is emblemized by the Chinese title for *La Recherche* as literally ‘pursuing the memory of time/years as (fleeting)

⁶ As will be examined later in the thesis, this is also when Freudian and to a lesser extent Foucauldian discourses on sexuality were (re)introduced in China.

⁷ This is not to suggest that those are the *only* issues explored by the Chinese Proustian community. As TU Weiqun observes, the ‘Chinese Proustian topics’ now include philosophy, aesthetics, the arts, and the First World War, in addition to time and memory. See Tu Weiqun, ‘A Review and Analysis of Proust Studies in China over the Past 60 Years’, *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 49.3 (2012), 91-100 (pp. 96-99).

water/river' (追忆似[逝]水年华).⁸ The hermeneutic richness of this Chinese title – invoking the Confucian definition of 'time' as 'water' and the Daoist association of 'water' with 'virtue' – which will be repeatedly examined in this thesis, seems to accord tacitly with most Chinese critics and translators' introduction of Proust to China as essentially a writer of 'stream-of-consciousness'.

Other no less important issues such as anti-Semitism, sadomasochism, and homosexuality are categorically neglected in the Chinese reception of Proust's work. The subject of homosexuality, for example, culturally dissociated from the resonances of 'sin' and 'hell' that it holds in the Christian tradition, has generated no particular reaction from the Chinese readership and met with political indifference in post-Mao contemporary China (in all likelihood because it does not directly contradict any particular Communist ideology or constitute any subversive power as far as the ruling regime is concerned).⁹ Anti-Semitism is seen as culturally irrelevant or even incomprehensible in the Chinese context, and hence hardly noticed in Proust's text.

If Chinese scholarly approaches to Proust's work are still inevitably bound by certain methodological and epistemological concerns over issues such as the comparability between Proust's fluid definition of time and the Chinese metaphysical conception of 'water/river', between Proustian psychological realism and the Buddhist vision of disillusionment, contemporary Chinese and Franco-Chinese writers interested in Proust are given free rein to appropriate *La Recherche* and displace Proust to the Chinese context in

⁸ The alternative version of the title (with the additional word 'fleeting') is mainly used in the Taiwanese edition.

⁹ Ironically, one of the most popular Chinese terms for 'homosexual' today, *tongzhi* (同志), is in fact the same word as the Chinese translation of 'comrade' in the Communist context. *Tongzhi* was appropriated in 1989 by a Hong Kong gay activist to designate 'homosexual' because of its positive connotation: while *tong* literally means 'same/homo-', *zhi* means 'aspiration'. For a fascinating exploration of the term, see Chou Wah-shan, *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (New York, London, Oxford: The Haworth Press, 2000), pp. 1-9.

their fictional works. In this regard, this thesis has selected three well-established contemporary mainland Chinese writers – WANG Xiaobo 王小波 (1952-1997), YU Hua 余华 (1960-), (ZHOU) WEI Hui (周)卫慧 (1973-)¹⁰ – and one Franco-Chinese writer François CHENG 程抱一 (1929-), whose works constitute a significant part of the present corpus.

Out of the numerous contemporary mainland Chinese writers who have commented on or made references to Proust in their writings, Wang's, Yu's, and Wei's intertextual engagements with *La Recherche* stand out as the most 'systematic' and consistent. They represent three successive generations as well as 'schools' of authors whose writing careers have taken off after the economic reform. Having both lived through the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Wang and Yu became active in the Chinese literary scene in the 1980's. However, the two writers had rather contrasting upbringings and literary backgrounds. Wang served as a 'rusticated youth' (*zhiqing*, 知青) during the Cultural Revolution, i.e. young people with a secondary or higher education sent to the countryside by force to 'help' peasants cultivate the land. After Mao's death, he returned to Beijing and finished his university degree, after which he spent four years in the United States completing a Master's degree in Far Eastern studies (1984-1988). His creative works, including the novella featuring Proust 'Fleeing Years As Water', manifest a mixed sense of dark humour and intellectual pleasure. Perhaps because of his living and learning experience in the West, Wang's essays in the late 1980's and early 1990's demonstrate a rather independent and individual approach to social and ethical debates on topics ranging from homosexuality, feminism, Chinese cinema, to the environment.¹¹ His wife LI Yinhe is

¹⁰ The author's real name is ZHOU Weihui, but she mostly uses her pen name WEI Hui instead.

¹¹ Most established contemporary Chinese writers, especially at this time, were affiliated with the official organisation under the Communist Party leadership now known as China Writers Association. The history of this association dates back to 1949. Until today, it still plays a key role in exercising political and ideological control over writers and artists'

an eminent Chinese sociologist of gender and sexuality studies. The couple co-authored the book-length study of contemporary Chinese male homosexuality *Their World* – the first of its kind in mainland China.¹² This work was to enhance the translators' understanding of Proust's sexual discourse in *La Recherche*, as manifested in the current new translations.

Different from Wang's scholarly background, Yu was brought up in the family of a countryside physician. With no knowledge of any language other than Chinese, Yu became a voracious reader of foreign literature in translation, through which he became acutely aware of literary style and writing techniques. He then quickly became a key member of the Chinese literary movement which briefly flourished in the 1980's, known as 'Chinese Avant-garde Literature' (*zhongguo xianfengpai wenxue*, 中国先锋派文学). The subjects of his first novel, *Zai xiyu zhong huha* (在细雨中呼喊, translated into French as *Cris dans la bruine*) (1991), bear strong thematic resonance with Proust's *La Recherche*: time and memory. Primarily because of his literary achievement in this novel, he was later named *Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French Ministry of Culture.

Born in the late 1970's, the diegetic concerns of the woman writer Wei, representative of the literary group known as 'The New Generation' (*wanshengdai*, 晚生代), have come far out of the shadow of the Cultural Revolution and the official Communist propaganda. In stark contrast to Wang and Yu's creative works which are still thematically and diegetically grounded in the 'national trauma' of China's recent history, Wei's stories are entirely preoccupied with the 'new' culture of urban consumption in the 1990's. She deliberately flaunts female sexuality in her fictional works, which has led to some of them

creative activities. Wang's essays demonstrate a very different stance from the dominant and generic views shared or deliberately kept quiet by his contemporaries. See Zicheng HONG, 'Literary Norms and the Literary Environment' in *A History of Contemporary Chinese Literature*, trans. by Michael M. Day (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 21-40.

¹² Li Yinhe and Wang Xiaobo. *Tamen de shijie* (*Their World*, 他们的世界) (Taiyuan: Shanxi People's Press, 1992).

being banned in China, consequently generating media sensationalism in the West. Wei's Francophilia is well-known and she explicitly cites Proust in her works probably more than any other Chinese writer. However, Proust often appears in some rather intriguing contexts (such as the hospital and the rock music scene), a detailed analysis of which reveals not only Wei's personal reinterpretation of Proust but also the postmodern reality of a particular branch of contemporary Chinese urban literature with, to appropriate Karl Marx's expression from the *Communist Manifesto*, a 'cosmopolitan character'.

As far as their relation to Proust's work is concerned, perhaps the most obvious difference between the three mainland Chinese writers and Chinese writers in exile in France is the latter's ability to read Proust in French. In fact, their acquaintance of *La Recherche* precedes its Chinese translation. This latter group includes the French Academician François CHENG (1929-), the Nobel Prize laureate GAO Xingjian (1940-), and the *Prix Femina* winner DAI Sijie (1954-). They were all born in China and immigrated to France since their adulthoods. While using the French language as their creative medium, these writers' strategies to intertextually engage with Proust's work superficially resemble those adopted by mainland Chinese writers. Sweeping references to Proust variably appear in their essays and creative works. However, these Franco-Chinese writers are much more self-conscious of their cultural assimilation in France as well as their fundamental intention to aesthetically reorient both Chinese and Western literary and artistic traditions. As Gao reflects: 'la lecture de Proust et Joyce – dont la quête du conscient et du subconscient, ainsi que la conception de l'angle de narration m'ont beaucoup aidé – m'a incité à étudier les différences entre les langues occidentales et chinoise'.¹³

Among the three, Cheng's engagement with Proust stands out as the most thorough. The importance of Proust's work as an intellectual and artistic model for Cheng,

¹³ Gao Xingjian, *Le Témoignage de la littérature* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), pp. 25-26.

especially in relation to his novel, *Le Dit de Tianyi* (1998), is best captured in the author's own words: 'ma démarche, sans prétention de ma part, est très proche de celle de Proust: avec cette langue, j'ai pu repenser ma vie, et repenser ma pensée, autrement que si j'étais resté en Chine'.¹⁴ Cheng's cultural enterprise goes beyond *intercultural* concerns which are predominantly configured according to the self/other paradigm that presumes two distinct cultural entities. His creative take on Proust in *Le Dit* not only reflects an active convergence of cultural differences, but perhaps more significantly, it emanates a new kind of transnational, transcultural literary aesthetics, whereby the prefix 'trans-' is understood both in the sense of 'boundary-crossing' and 'transcendence' (Cheng's own word).¹⁵ Cheng's idea of transcendence shows his conscious take on the *responsibility* for prefiguring the possibilities of cross-cultural transformation in his fictional works. Such a creative propaganda signals a key 'operative' aspect of the concept of transculturality as formulated by Wolfgang Iser.¹⁶ In order that there is cultural transcendence, there has to be cultural 'dialogue' – another key word that lies at the heart of Cheng's intellectual ambition and aesthetic vision. He insists that such cultural dialogue should be 'equal', 'reciprocal', and 'mutually beneficial'.¹⁷ Cheng's fictional dialogue with Proust goes beyond the kind of

¹⁴ François Cheng, 'La Double Culture d'un Académicien', in *Débats francophones. Recueil des conférences et actes 2000-2005*, ed. by Lise et Paul Sabourin (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2005), pp. 357-373 (pp. 370-371).

¹⁵ I make this distinction between 'intercultural' and 'transcultural' advisedly, following Alex Hughes's suggestion: 'both [terms] tend to be employed interchangeably in studies on/of cultural contact, to suggest movement and exchange between divergent cultural organizations and regimes. [...] the former implies the meeting, convergence, and encounter of entities emblematic of cultural difference, while the latter conveys a more active conjunction and blending of differences, of that which epitomizes difference'. See Alex Hughes, *France/China: Intercultural Imaginings* (London: Legenda, 2007), p. 9.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Iser, 'Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today', in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. by Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194-213 (p. 200).

¹⁷ QIAN Linsen, 'Zhongxifang zhexue mingyun de lishi yuhe – Cheng Baoyi: *Tianyiyuan ji qita*' ('The Historical Encounter of Destiny between Chinese and Western Philosophies – François Cheng and Others', 中西方哲学命运的历史遇合 – 程抱一及其他), *Kua wenhua duihua*

‘Proustian rewritings’, where the posterior writer creatively introduces and elaborates specific critical perspectives from which Proust’s work can be differently interpreted and understood. As far as Cheng’s *démarche proustienne* is concerned, *La Recherche* is only a point of departure – rather than destination – from which Cheng effects his intercultural transaction. More concretely, in *Le Dit*, such intercultural transaction involves self-conscious constructions of intellectual, artistic, and historical ‘parallels’ or ‘equivalents’ from both Western and Eastern cultural heritages. Given the temporal distance between *La Recherche* and *Le Dit*, Cheng’s ‘dialogue’ signifies what Wai Chee Dimock in her ‘theory of resonance’ formulates as ‘an interaction between texts and their future readers, complicated by the dynamics of historical change and by the interpretive energies thus released’.¹⁸ Cheng’s ‘dialogue of transcendence’ should not be understood along the line of Hegelian dialectics with its emphasis on the dynamics of opposition, contradiction, and negation in order to arrive at a higher truth – Hegel’s thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Rather, Cheng’s ‘dialogue’ strongly echoes Bahktinian dialogism, especially in the sense that it allows seemingly incompatible elements to coexist, interact, and interplay within different perspectives of equal value, so that they can produce new languages, new ways of seeing, and new realities. In fact, this ambition to transcend cultures primarily through the linguistic medium is widely shared in the world community of translingual writers, as Steven Kellman duly observes:

Refusing to be constrained by the structures of any single language, translinguals seem both to acknowledge and to defy the claims of linguistic

(*Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 跨文化研究), 3 (1999), 2-14 (p. 12). 平等对话 [...] 对话是双向的, 收益也是双方的

¹⁸ Dimock is also making a reference to Bahktin’s theory of the ‘dialogic’ in the context. See Wai Chee Dimock, ‘A Theory of Resonance’, *PMLA*, 112.5 (1997), pp. 1060-1071 (p. 1062).

determinism. It is precisely because they recognize the power of particular languages that they attempt to transcend them.¹⁹

Proust's relation, whether aesthetic or spiritual, with the Far East has never ceased to fascinate generations of Proust scholars. As early as 1952, Georges Cattaui already made comparisons between Proustian spirituality with a mixed group of both Western and Eastern mystics.²⁰ Barbara J. Bucknall subsequently devotes an entire chapter to the exploration of the affinity between Proust's 'religion of art' and notable Eastern thoughts such as Hinduism and Buddhism.²¹ More recently, the subject of Proust's *japonisme* was treated in Luc Fraisse's rather brief but nevertheless insightful study, and the same subject was more extensively examined in Junji Suzuki's doctoral thesis.²² The subject was then picked up again by Jan Walsh Hokenson, in the context of a much wider exploration of aesthetic exchange between France and Japan.²³

Compared to Proust's *japonisme*, the writer's partaking of *chinoiserie* is fleeting and fragmentary, and indeed, *chinoiserie* in Proust is sometimes indistinguishable from *japonisme* or *japonaiserie*. Christine Froula's essay 'Proust's China' is one of the very few more extensive studies of Proust's relation to China, primarily through the discussion of Chinese artefacts (punning hence on 'china') in Proust's work.²⁴ In the past decade, most

¹⁹ Steven G. Kellman, *Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp. 23-24.

²⁰ See Georges Cattaui, *Marcel Proust: Proust et son temps; Proust et le temps* (Paris: Julliard, 1952).

²¹ Barbara J. Bucknall, 'Mysticism', in *The Religion of Art in Proust* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1969), pp. 173-203.

²² Luc Fraisse, *Proust et le japonisme* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 1997). Junji Suzuki's thesis was published under the same title, *Proust et le japonisme* (Lille: ANRT, 1997).

²³ Jan Walsh Hokenson, 'Proust: From a Japaniste Cup of Tea', in *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), pp. 204-224.

²⁴ Christine Froula, 'Proust's China', in *Modernism and the Orient*, ed. by Zhaoming Qian (New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2012), pp. 74-109.

scholarly works engaging with 'Proust and China' have focused on 'China's Proust' instead, that is, the reception of Proust's work in China. This is also the main research direction undertaken by the present thesis.

Yinde Zhang's section in *Le Monde romanesque chinois au XX^e siècle*, entitled 'Proust: de la traduction à la réécriture', comments on a few general lexical, syntactical, and stylistic issues raised in the *First Translation*, and swiftly offers a factual account of Proust's reception history in China, followed by an exhaustive collection of intertextual references made by a large number of contemporary mainland Chinese writers in their respective essays and fictional works.²⁵ Many of these ideas are recapitulated in HUANG Hong's article 'Proust retrouvé'.²⁶ Written in Chinese, TU Weiqun's article surveys the critical and academic reception of Proust in China.²⁷ However, most of these critics' observations are empirical and introductory – rather than theoretical and analytical – in nature.²⁸ *Le Monde romanesque*, for example, as its full title suggests, is preoccupied with the Chinese literary and intellectual history of the twentieth century at large. The example of Proust only adds to the critic's more general surveys of the 'réception de la littérature française en Chine' and the 'intertextualité franco-chinoise'. In fact, this lack of a conceptual approach to 'Proust and China' in current scholarship has been explicitly acknowledged by Huang: 'la Chine rattrape le temps perdu, l'aventure de Proust dans l'Empire du Milieu ne fait que

²⁵ It is worth mentioning that Zhang was previously involved in the *First Translation* and co-translated the volume *La Prisonnière*. Yinde Zhang, *Le Monde*, pp. 109-132. He reiterates many of his points in 'La Traduction de Proust dans le champ littéraire chinois', in *Littérature comparée. Perspectives chinoises* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008), pp. 31-49.

²⁶ Huang Hong, 'Proust retrouvé', in *D'après Proust*, ed. by Philippe Forest and Stéphane Audeguy (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Française, 2013), pp. 294-304.

²⁷ Tu Weiqun, 'A Review'.

²⁸ One should add Luc Fraisse's rather short and speculative, but nevertheless prefigurative book section on Cheng and Proust, 'Le Dit de Tianyi, palimpseste de *La Recherche*?', in *La Petite Musique du style: Proust et ses sources littéraires* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010), pp. 633-639.

commencer, traductions et retraductions, études et réécritures, toute une sociologie de la réception de l'œuvre de Proust reste à faire'.²⁹

This thesis seeks thus to fill the current blind spot in criticism by addressing the 'Proustian adventure' in China in a more systematic way. It sets out to see Proust through a cross-cultural and comparative prism, exploring how certain Proustian themes and techniques have been variably reframed, rethought, and reoriented by translators and writers alike against the backdrop of Chinese philosophical and aesthetic traditions as well as contemporary sociological discourses. The analytical focus is on the cross-cultural dialogue between Proust's *La Recherche* – the *hypotext* – and its multiple Chinese translations and novelistic *hypertexts*³⁰ (written in Chinese or in French), a dialogue underpinned by a wealth of ideologically inflected textual relations: mistranslation, appropriation, adaptation, citation, parody, pastiche, and rewriting.

La Recherche and its posterior (Franco-)Chinese hypertexts naturally bear a certain relation of *influence*. But different from the common assumption of influence studies, this thesis proceeds to increasingly trace the Proustian influence from the hypertexts to the hypotext, rather than in the reverse order. Approaching Proust's literary legacy from the perspective of the Chinese translation and (Franco-)Chinese authors' creative engagement with his work entails lateral thinking, which, to appropriate Mary Orr's formulation, 'like an incoming tributary, generates something which was not there previously, whether qualitatively or quantitatively'.³¹ Orr's concept of 'positive influence' is particularly useful for my investigation of the various literary relations between Proust and Chinese culture,

²⁹ Huang, 'Proust retrouvé', p. 304.

³⁰ Genette defines his concept of *hypertextualité* as follows: 'j'entends par là toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr, *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière qui n'est pas celle du commentaire'. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La Littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), pp. 11-12.

³¹ Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 84-85.

through which I hope to illustrate the ‘further and more holistic transformational impact’³² that such cross-cultural engagements with the canon could exert on the ways we negotiate and re-think cultural heritages of China and the West. ‘Positive influence’, according to Orr, is a ‘facilitation of informed imagination’:

[it] aims at a variety of responses, not more of the same. It is therefore intrinsic to understanding change, revolt, regress and progress, depending on factors such as, for example, censorship or ideological control [...] Beyond tradition, positive influence thus tackles mimetic and anti-mimetic ends and means and can enlist a variety of stimuli.³³

Furthermore, Orr’s insistence on the hydraulic etymology of the word ‘influence’ serendipitously reminds us once again of the Chinese title for *La Recherche* as ‘Pursuing the Memory of Time/Years as Water/River’:

Influence is quintessentially a metaphor of motions and fluids, applied to waters that swell a greater river or freeze as blocks in seas, its many self-contained general and specific uses need to be reinstated not least for its power to map flow, force, currents, divergence and convergence.³⁴

In this light, the Proustian ‘influence’ can be understood as a variety of ‘hydraulic forces’ that interact with the Chinese intellectual and artistic landscape and its attached cultural system, a process through which these forces themselves undergo unforeseeable transformations.

The three key areas of exploration indicated in the title of the present thesis – translation, intertext, transcultural dialogue – signal, at once, a strict and narrow focus on a particular form of literary relation between Proust and China in each chapter/part of the study, and an interrelated and, in many ways, theoretically overlapping, approach to such a

³² *Ibid.* p. 85.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 93.

relation in the literary polysystem. In the case of international canonization such as Proust's work in China, translation is of paramount importance. It is what makes mainland Chinese writers' intertextual engagement with Proust possible. As Susan Bassnett affirmatively asserts: 'no discussion of influence or intertextuality can take place without recognition of the role played by translators, and the context in which those translations were produced'.³⁵ Even more crucial to my comparatist approach to Proust is to see the Chinese translations of his work as a means of understanding the economic, political, and cultural exchange, tension, struggle, and evolution in our current global context.³⁶ The use of the term 'translation' then gradually shifts from a strict and literal sense and comes to be understood as a 'translational' relation between Proust's and (Franco-)Chinese writers' works, which can be called a form of 'bound intertextuality' in D'Haen's critical vocabulary.³⁷

The notions of both 'translation' and 'intertextuality' open up theoretical avenues for 'transcultural dialogue', as in the case of Cheng's thorough and systemic engagement with Proust's work. Although it is beyond the scope of the present study, let us also keep in view Cheng's other career as a literary translator of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Apollinaire and Michaux from French to Chinese as well as of ancient Tang poetry from Chinese to French. As an exophonic migrant writer of the French language from a non-postcolonial background,

³⁵ Susan Bassnett, 'Influence and Intertextuality: A Reappraisal', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43.2 (2007), 134-146 (p. 143).

³⁶ I owe this remark to both D'Haen's and Apter's works. See Theo D'Haen, 'Antique Lands, New Worlds? Comparative Literature, Intertextuality, Translation', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43.2 (2007), 108-120; Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³⁷ According to D'Haen, 'bound intertextuality' 'posits a stricter link between two (or more) texts than is necessarily the case in an intertextual relation, where the mere mention of an element from another text may suffice to qualify the relation as such. At the same time, the relation here suggested is always less strict than that which we usually associate with a "real" translation'. Theo D'Haen, 'Comparative Literature, Intertextuality, Translation', p. 108.

Cheng has ‘un rapport plus décomplexé à la France et au français’ than many French postcolonial writers.³⁸ However, Mary Pratt’s concept of ‘autoethnography’ can still be transposed and adaptively applied here outside its original postcolonial context. While displacing Proust into the Chinese context, Cheng, as the migrant (instead of the colonized) subject, undertakes to represent his culture of origin in ways that engage with the terms of his adopted culture. His ‘autoethnographic writing’, which ‘involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms’ of his Western readership, is constructed ‘*in response to or in dialogue* with those metropolitan representations’ of Europeans themselves as well as Chinese culture.³⁹ Cheng’s transcultural and translingual enterprise aims precisely to rebalance the ‘highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination’ that characterizes Pratt’s postcolonial conception of the ‘contact zone’ (informed by linguistic studies on ‘contact language’), where ‘the relations among colonizers and colonized, or travelers and “travelees” are treated ‘in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices’ instead of ‘separateness’.⁴⁰ Such radically asymmetrical relations of power are what Cheng’s notion of ‘dialogue’ sets out to ‘transcend’. In doing so, Cheng, as he repeatedly acknowledges himself, has effectively created a new *voix/Voie*⁴¹ and invented a new self. As Kellman rightly points out, translingualism is ‘a form of self-begetting’ and ‘the willed renovation of an individual’s own identity’.⁴² Therefore, Cheng’s transcultural dialogue with Proust is also a personal internal dialogue between his two inextricable identities.

³⁸ Mathis-Moser, Ursula and Birgit Mertz-Baumgartner, ‘Introduction’, in *Passages et ancrages en France: Dictionnaire des écrivains migrants de langue française (1981-2011)* (Paris: Champion, 2012), pp. 8-51 (p. 43).

³⁹ Pratt’s original formulation of ‘autoethnography’ has been largely adapted here to suit my purpose. See Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd Edition (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 9. Italics are mine.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁴¹ I will explore Cheng’s play on the two French homonyms in detail in Part II.

⁴² Kellman, *Translingual Imagination*, p. 21.

The present thesis not only follows a geographical progression from mainland China to the Chinese diaspora in France; the discussion of the translations of Proust into Chinese and of Chinese authors' engagement with Proust in their fictional works also largely follows a chronological order. Part I deals with the reception of Proust in mainland China. The first chapter begins with an interpretive account of the ideological trajectory of the reception of Proust in China in the twentieth century. It then compares and contrasts all the available Chinese translations – integral and selective – of *La Recherche* since the late 1980's, and explores their different emphases as well as negligence of Proustian themes. I extensively comment on the distinctive features of each translation and edition, and, in the case of abridged translations, their selective criteria. I examine how these features have been informed by the development of the two major French editions of *La Recherche* (published by the Pléiade and Flammarion). The chapter ends with a close study of various strategies employed to translate passages on homosexuality and sadomasochism in Proust's work, which reflect changing discourses on and attitudes to these subjects in contemporary Chinese society.

Chapter II explores the ways in which the three aforementioned mainland Chinese writers' intertextual practice creatively re-contextualizes and re-energizes Proust's text in their respective short stories and novellas (including numerous paratexts). The chapter inspects how the three writers, primarily under the influence of the *First Translation*, cite Proust partly to enhance the cultural prestige of their works, while creating a horizon of expectation and a favourable climate of reception of Proust's work in China. Throughout the 1980's and well into the 1990's, these writers were, on the one hand, consciously experimenting with Modernist (not just Proust's) styles and techniques, and often prided themselves on being 'avant-gardists'. On the other hand, the ways they took on Proust

cannot be innocent of 'kitschifying' the author, that is, superficially citing Proust and reducing his novel to an easily 'consumable' commodity.⁴³

With a shift of focus to the Chinese diaspora in France, Part II thoroughly compares Proust with Cheng. This part explores Cheng's French-language novel *Le Dit* as the author's intellectual and artistic dialogue with Proust's *La Recherche*. The study starts with an intertextual analysis of the various paratexts of Cheng's novel and then proceeds to examine in detail Cheng's conceptual and structural engagement with three key areas of *La Recherche*: the novel as both a *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*, Proust's novelistic approach to the arts (literature, painting, theatre, and music), and mythological motifs. Cheng's *Le Dit* offers a double perspective on Franco-Chinese literary and cultural interaction which epitomizes a fundamentally different process of literary creation through intertextual practice and 'cultural translation'.

What exactly are the distinctively 'Chinese features' in the Chinese reception and, to a certain extent, recreation, of *La Recherche*? How have they evolved along with the shifting ideological tensions in contemporary Chinese society, especially with regard to China's drastically changing relation to the West in the past thirty years? What are the commonalities and qualitative differences between the reception of Proust in China and that of the Chinese diaspora in France? These are the questions that the following study undertakes to illuminate.

⁴³ My observation will be built on Margaret Gray's work on Proust, to which I will return in Part I Chapter II. See Margaret Gray, *Postmodern Proust* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

Part I

The Reception of Proust in China

Chapter I

Proust and the Chinese Translations

I.1. Proust in China: An Ideological Trajectory

Translation, in the context of early-twentieth-century China, fundamentally shaped the Chinese literary language and precipitated its transformation from ‘rigid’ classical to ‘free’ modern vernacular Chinese. Immediate examples include the use of ‘translationese’ in creative writing,¹ the implementation of (essentially) Western punctuation,² linguistic and literary tools and concepts (such as the linguistic typology developed since Plato) in the ‘new’ kind of vernacular writing as well as the re-formatting and re-examination of Chinese classic texts. The Chinese translation and reception of Proust have been particularly determined and overdetermined by the changing political and sociological factors behind each of the following key historical stages of twentieth-century China.

¹ ‘Translationese’ designates the deliberate use of unidiomatic use of language in a translated text, as Venuti adds: ‘what is unidiomatic in one cultural formation can be aesthetically effective in another’. See Venuti, *History of Translation*, p. 98. For a most recent discussion of the role of ‘translationese’ (*fanyiti*, 翻译体) in modern and contemporary Chinese creative writings, see WANG Jiaxin, ‘Fanyi wenxue, fanyi, fanyiti’ (‘Literature in Translation, Translation, Translationese’, 翻译文学, 翻译, 翻译体), *Dangdai zuojia pinglun* (*Contemporary Chinese Writers Criticism*, 当代中国作家批评), 2 (2013), 129-137.

² Interestingly, as will be discussed, when translating Proust’s long sentences into Chinese, due to the grammatical absence of relative clauses, one of the solutions is a significantly increased use of commas – its usage being far less strict than in English, French or German. See XU Jun, ‘Sentence and Translation: Accessing the Chinese Translation of Long Sentences in *In Search of Lost Time*’, *Waiyu yanjiu* (*Foreign Studies*) 1 (1993), 9-16 (pp. 13-14); see also SUN Kun, ‘The Study on C-E & E-C Translation and Punctuation’, in *Zhongguo yinghanyu bijiao yanjiuhui diqici quanguo xueshu yantaolunwenji* (*Collected Essays from the Seventh National Conference of the Society for English-Chinese Comparative Studies*), pp. 1-10.

Prior to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Proust was briefly introduced in two or three popular academic journals and reviews, very often through translated articles written by Western writers such as Aldous Huxley and Jean Cocteau, without generating much interest. Only one extract from *Du côté de chez Swann* and one novella from *Les Plaisirs et les jours*, 'La Fin de la jalousie', had been translated into Chinese.³ There was one extensive critical introduction of Proust (around 20 000 Chinese characters) carried out by ZENG Juezhi, published as two journal articles in 1933. But Zeng's work was almost completely overlooked by his contemporary scholarly community.⁴ Modernist writers such as Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot were met with much more enthusiasm.

Under the Maoist regime (1949-1976), the official slogan: 'literature must serve workers-peasants-soldiers and the proletarian cause', constituted the only criterion of selection and judgment for translation projects and critical activities, which naturally excluded Proust, considered to be a paragon of bourgeois literature. In fact, almost the entire Western literature of the twentieth century was accused of being 'decadent',⁵ except for a few '*progressistes*' writers such as Romain Rolland, Aragon and Barbusse, accompanied by Roger Vailland and André Stil who are known for their deep sympathy for the Communist cause.⁶ Proust particularly suffered from Soviet scholars' forceful critique of *La Recherche* as 'an anti-realist, anti-social novel, which notably terminates the decadent

³ See Huang, 'Proust', pp. 295-296.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 295-296; See also Tu, 'Review', p. 92.

⁵ In the context of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, the most widely accepted word for 'decadent' is *tuifei* (颓废), which is not unrelated to the European literary and artistic movement of the late nineteenth century. But *tuifei*, as an adjective, is loosely used to describe the artistic and literary mood that conveys pessimism or indulgence in physical desire – much broader a notion than *tuifei zhuyi*, literally 'decadentism', which specifically refers to an artistic and literary movement both in Europe and China. See WANG Hongjian, *Performing Perversion: Decadence in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature* (doctoral thesis, University of California, Riverside) (ProQuest LLC, 2012).

⁶ Zhang, *Monde*, p. 88.

tendency of not only France, but the whole of Europe'.⁷ Due to the contemporaneous political ideological bond, many Soviet scholars' criticisms functioned as a decisive lens through which China saw the West. Then, during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all non-official publications were interrupted.⁸

The immediate period after the economic reform (1978) led by DENG Xiaoping witnessed a major revival of intellectual enthusiasm for translation and the introduction of Western literary and philosophical texts, especially those of the early twentieth century, which directly impacted on what we could perceive as Chinese Modernism.⁹ Various fragmentary translations of Proust's works started to emerge and were frequently anthologized in the 1980's.¹⁰ These translation projects were conducive to the eventual publication of the integral translation of *La Recherche* between 1989 and 1991. It must be noted that the intellectual energy of the late 1980's, often discussed under the banner of 'Cultural Fever', was characterized by a dynamic tension between the opening up to Western cultural production and a rediscovery of Chinese cultural heritage. Again, this historical specificity will leave its mark on the translation and creative reception of *La Recherche*.

⁷ Cited in Tu, 'Review', p. 92. The English translation is mine. 反现实主义、反社会的小说，不仅是法国的、而且也是整个欧洲的颓废倾向的特殊的总结

⁸ In terms of the Chinese literary production in general during this period, Julia Lovell observes that there was an average of eight, increasingly socialist realist novels being published each year between 1949 and 1966, and that figure shrank during the Cultural Revolution. She further adds that an independent relationship between a mainland Chinese writer and a Western translator (or *vice versa*) was virtually impossible. Julia Lovell, 'The Key to China', *Prospect* 192 (February 2012)

<<http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/the-key-to-china-literary-magazines-new-chinese-fiction-pathlight-chutzpah>> (para. 1) [accessed 26 November 2014].

⁹ Or sometimes referred to as 'residual modernism' because Western Modernism was extensively introduced and developed in China at the beginning of the twentieth century – but Proust did not receive much attention –, only severely interrupted after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. See Xiaobing TANG, *Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 198-200.

¹⁰ For a list of extracts and novellas selected for translation, see Huang, 'Proust', p. 297.

However, the relative intellectual freedom of the 1980's conducive to the pro-democracy movement was quickly shattered by the Event of Tian'anmen Square in 1989, and 'the immediate post-Tian'anmen years (1989-92) saw the collapse of the lively and multi-voiced intellectual space of the late 1980's'.¹¹ Restrictions on cinematic and literary productions were immediately tightened. And yet, in the same years, the Chinese translation of Proust's *La Recherche* appeared.

The exact year might be coincidental, but the *Zeitgeist* was not. The period between 1989 and 1993 witnessed a crucial ideological battleground in contemporary Chinese intellectual, political, and social history. With a new twist of economic reform, known as 'marketization', Chinese society rapidly moved on from the 'Cultural Fever' of the 1980's to the 'Market Fever' of the 1990's. Proust was translated in the context of a society where bourgeois values were in the ascendant. Since Proust had been primarily seen as an 'apolitical' writer, with a *typical* 'bourgeois' emphasis on 'aesthetic autonomy', it was politically safe for both Chinese intellectuals to translate and the Communist regime to promote his work, while still staying consistent with the overarching ideology of cultural modernization. Indeed, the Chinese Ministry of Culture officially endorsed this translation project by awarding the First Prize for the first *National Book Prize for Best Foreign Literature* to *La Recherche* as soon as its complete translation was published in 1991. So, interestingly, it seems that the reason that Proust's novel had not been translated under Mao – because of its status as 'bourgeois literature' – became the *de facto* reason that it was translated under Deng, and the official endorsement of such literature in 1991

¹¹ It is difficult to assess the general impact of this event on ordinary Chinese people throughout China. Western and Chinese media, both calling on witnesses, tend to offer polarized views on the subject. But the Chinese intelligentsia was certainly hurt most deeply, and the event has decidedly changed their relation with the state. See Xudong ZHANG, *Whither China: Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 14-15.

symbolically announced a new phase of modern China understood as ‘*post-revolutionary*’. Jean Milly, the co-founder of the *Centre d’Études Proustiennes* and the general editor of the Flammarion edition of *La Recherche*, was invited to the Proust conference organized in Beijing in 1991, and he still vividly recalls today the formal and in many ways ‘novel’ procedures with which he was greeted by Communist Party officials.¹²

In sum, we could observe that Proust was translated for the following reasons: first, the Chinese intellectual and artistic enthusiasm for and commitment to introducing the long-awaited Western canon, in an attempt to fill in the blank; second, the text’s political safety, or rather, ambiguity in terms of ideological message; and third, the commercial potential in the new social environment under the so-called ‘socialist market economy’ or simply marketization. The last, commercial, aspect is confirmed by one translator’s report on the Chinese translation to the *Bulletin Marcel Proust* in 1992, in which he was already envisaging a new translation of *La Recherche*.¹³ It is worth pointing out that the market also provides a new space for Chinese intellectuals after Tian’anmen to ‘find their less restrained articulations’.¹⁴ Without the market factor, the rivalry between the two major Chinese publishing houses for their respective launches of the new translation of *Du côté de chez*

¹² Personal communication effectuated on 16 November 2012, on the Proust Study Day organized by Mireille Naturel, entitled ‘Le Centre de Recherches Proustiennes de la Sorbonne nouvelle: historique et perspectives’. See also Jean Milly, ‘La Chine rattrape le temps perdu’, *Libération*, 26 December 1991. Milly is still in close collaboration with the translator XU Hejin who is responsible for one of the two new translations of *La Recherche*. Milly’s new extensive preface interestingly mentions the theme of homosexuality several times, in sharp contrast to André Maurois’s preface included in the first translation of *La Recherche*. The importance of *La Recherche*’s Chinese prefaces will be fully explored later in this chapter.

¹³ ‘Je crois que, avec le développement de cette recherche et compte tenu de la multiplicité des éditions de *la Recherche* en France, il apparaîtra dans quelques années une nouvelle traduction chinoise, moins commerciale, plus littéraire et de meilleure qualité’. XU Hejin, ‘La Traduction de *La Recherche* en chinois’, *Bulletin Marcel Proust*, 42 (1992), 179-180 (p. 180).

¹⁴ For an insightful account of Chinese intellectuals’ position after Tian’anmen, see Zhang, *Whither China*, pp. 14-24.

Swann in 2004 and 2005, along with their massive media promotions, would have been unforeseeable. One of the two individual translators, Zhou Kexi, publicly talks (with an established writer CHEN Cun) about his concern over the Chinese book market for Proust's work, explaining how this market factor has affected his translation strategy.¹⁵

It is important to acknowledge that the Chinese translation and reception of Proust's *La Recherche* as a high Modernist work seriously clashed with the postmodern context in which the translation appeared.¹⁶ The great intensity of China's explosive development from modernity to postmodernity was directly influenced by the West, yet unparalleled in the West.¹⁷ The 'profound social anomalies and ideological contradictions'¹⁸ which mark Chinese postmodernity will explain, on a micro level, mainland Chinese writers' rather *equivocal* intertextual engagement with Proust, which will be examined in Chapter II.

I.2. Proust in Chinese Translations: An Overview

There is only one integral translation of Proust's *La Recherche* into Chinese to date, but there are multiple incomplete translations and editions. The integral translation, a

¹⁵ I will return to Zhou's remark in Section I.5. Zhou Kexi, 'Yu Chen Cun liao pulusite' ('Conversing with Chen Cun on Proust'), in *Yi Bian Cao* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2012), pp. 203-222.

¹⁶ There have been important scholarly works that explore the 'postmodern elements' in Proust's work, perceiving Proust as a proto-postmodern writer. However, it is not the way Proust was received in China. My focus here is on certain 'postmodern characteristics' reflected in mainland Chinese writers' use of Proust. See Margaret Gray, *Postmodern Proust* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

¹⁷ The theoretical legitimacy of discoursing on Chinese postmodernism was most famously initiated by Frederic Jameson's guest lecture at Peking University in 1985. It was later published in Chinese as 'Postmodernism and Cultural Theory', which exercised a profound influence on many Chinese intellectuals far into the 1990's.

¹⁸ The quotation continues: 'Chinese *postmodernism* is the most forceful expression of these anomalies and contradictions in the realm of art and culture'. See Sheldon H. Lu, *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 66.

collective work shared by fifteen Chinese scholars, was first published between 1989 and 1991, and has been re-published thereafter in different formats, sometimes with minor revisions. In 1992, as part of a much wider translation project entitled 'Twentieth-Century French Literature Series' directed by LIU Mingjiu, SHEN Zhiming adaptively translated *La Recherche*, condensing it into one single volume subtitled 'Essential Selection'.¹⁹ It is an 'adaptive' translation because the selection of the passages for this translation, as will be examined in detail, is based on Proust's earlier visioning of the overall structure of *La Recherche*. Almost a decade later, two influential Chinese publishers for 'foreign studies' commissioned two competing new individual translations of *La Recherche* (which are still work in progress today). XU Hejin and ZHOU Kexi, had both previously been involved in the *First Translation*. Zhou's and Xu's translations of *Du côté de chez Swann* appeared in 2004 and 2005 respectively. In addition to *Du côté de chez Swann*, other available volumes from Xu include *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (2010) and *Le Côté de Guermantes* (2011); and from Zhou, equally *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (2010) and then *La Prisonnière* (2012) – this is mainly due to his previous participation in the translation of the same volume. While Xu continues to work on the rest of *La Recherche*, Zhou has publicly expressed his regret for not being able to pursue his ambition any further due to his senility and poor health.²⁰ Meanwhile, in 2006, Zhou translated the first two volumes of Stéphane Heuet's comic book adaptation of *La Recherche*. Additionally, in 2009, he published an abridged version of his own translation of *Du côté de chez Swann*.²¹

¹⁹ This translation will be referred to as the *Essential Selection*.

²⁰ Zhou Kexi, 'Yixu' ('Preface to the Translation', 译序), in *A la recherche du temps perdu* (comic book adaptation by Stéphane Heuet), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2006).

²¹ Full publication details of all these above-mentioned editions are given in the bibliography.

Whereas discussions on whether *La Recherche* as a whole should be best translated individually or collectively are quite common among readers, translators, and scholars of Proust around the world,²² the idea of *selectively* translating *La Recherche*, condensing Proust's work into an 'approachable' size with all the good intentions to give the general Chinese reader a quality taster of 'the uniqueness of Proust's literary charm',²³ is indeed quite unique to the Chinese context. Condensation inevitably entails reduction, but as will be scrutinized, this kind of 'anthological' reduction is fundamentally different from what Margret Gray terms 'kitschification' of Proust, whereby Proust's canonical work is reduced to an almost empty signifier, disconnected from its original signified.²⁴

1.3. First Translation

The *First Translation*²⁵ has been most intensely scrutinized by Chinese scholars and writers alike. It exercises the greatest impact on the academic, creative, and popular receptions of Proust in China. Problems with this translation have been well studied by XU Jun, who co-translated the volume *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, and TU Weiqun.²⁶ It would be particularly beneficial for us to recapitulate two major critical observations in the following.

²² For example, see Christopher Prendergast, 'General Editor's Preface', in *The Way by Swann's*, trans. Lydia Davis (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. vii-xxi.

²³ The quoted phrase is taken from Zhou's 'Abridgement Notice'. In Shen's *Essential Selection*, similar remarks are made by the general director of the book series Liu in the preface. In the Western context, however, such a 'taster'-approach to Proust in translation tend to appear in the audiobook version, but the choices of the passages are often made by the producer (rather than the translator) from the available translation in print. See, for example, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit (Audio-CD)*, read by Maria Wimmer. Universal Music. 2010.

²⁴ Gray, *Postmodern Proust*, p. 166. The tendency to 'kitschify' Proust's work in the Chinese creative reception of *La Recherche* will be examined in the next chapter.

²⁵ See Footnote 1 in the Introduction.

²⁶ See XU Jun, 'Translating Proust into Chinese: Retrospect and Reflection', *Chinese Translators Journal*, 1 (2007), 27-31. See also TU Weiqun, 'Wenxue jiezuo de yongheng

First is disparity in translation style. Interestingly, this major criticism in many ways goes against the justification given by Christopher Prendergast, the general editor of *La Recherche*'s new English translation published with Penguin, for the decision to re-translate the novel *collectively*, as he comments, 'multiple selves, multiple worlds, multiple styles: this, paradoxically, is the quintessence of Proust'.²⁷ While this observation is certainly valid, certain aspects of 'stylistic variation' in the Chinese translation risk rendering Proust's text gratuitously perplexing. For instance, particular inconsistencies arise when different translators are confronted with the task of translating French proper names *phonetically* with Chinese characters (instead of the Roman alphabet). Given the overwhelmingly large presence of people and places and their (in)frequent (re)appearances in Proust's novel, the *First Translation*, and especially its first edition, is often suspected of somewhat 'irresponsibly' creating an onomastic labyrinth for the Chinese reader far more erratic than it is in the original.²⁸ This problem of stylistic inconsistency is exacerbated by the fact that not all of the first translators finished reading the whole novel at the time of translation.²⁹

Second are technical mistranslations for a number of reasons. Given the linguistic difficulty of Proust's work, many translators' rather disparate knowledge of French culture and language,³⁰ the lack of collaboration with French or other international Proust scholars, technical mistranslations are quite common. They sometimes include 'basic' errors such as

shengming: Guanyu *Zhuiyi sishui nianhua* de liangge zhongyiben' ('The Eternal Life of Great Literary Work: About the Two Chinese Translations of *In Search of Lost Time*'), *Wenyi yanjiu* (*Research on Art and Literature*), 12 (2010), 138-148.

²⁷ Christopher Prendergast, 'Preface', p. xviii.

²⁸ However, the editor of the *First Translation* does specify that there were indeed attempts before and during the translation process to unify proper nouns.

²⁹ This is an important anecdote recounted by the translator Zhou himself. See Zhou Kexi, 'Chen Cun', p.193.

³⁰ It is worth reminding ourselves that the reform and opening up policy of China was in place for barely 10 years by then and the field of Proust studies was still in its embryonic stage.

mistaking 'Bretagne' for 'la Grande Bretagne' in the second volume of *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. As Tu points out, had the translator acquired a better knowledge of even the preceding volume (translated by someone else), this error would have been easily avoided.³¹ Unfortunately, as Tu's analysis shows, while correcting many errors found in the *First Translation*, the new translation by Xu also contains mistranslations which do not exist in the *First Translation*.³² The coordinator of the *First Translation*, HAN Hulin, remarks in a report that quite a few translators were unsatisfied by their own work and kept sending him notes and corrections by post after the publication, so that certain inaccurate renditions could be ameliorated in future editions.³³ But there is nothing unique about mistranslating Proust into Chinese. At a recent international conference in Paris entitled 'Comment traduire Proust?' (2013), many scholars and translators alike expressed their common frustration with 'basic' – yet somehow 'unavoidable' (for both cultural and interpretive reasons) – translation errors in different languages while acknowledging the courage and the overall quality of those translations. In this respect, it seems that the translations of Proust's *Recherche*, just like the composition of the novel itself, will always remain an *œuvre inachevée*.

The *First Translation* is based on the old French Pléiade edition published in 1954, which is one technical reason why many scholars feel the need to re-translate *La Recherche*, as the novel underwent two major textual revisions in France respectively commissioned by two different publishers, i.e. Flammarion (1984-1987) and Gallimard (1987-1989). These two rather competitive revisions in many ways entail the two competing new Chinese

³¹ Tu Weiqun, 'Wenxue jiezuo', p. 146.

³² *Ibid.* pp. 146-147.

³³ See HAN Hulin, 'Zheli you yipian pinghe de jingtu: ji *Zhuyi sishui nianhua* de yizhemen' ('Here is a peaceful land: A note on *La Recherche*'s translators'). *China Publishing Journal*, 4 (1990), 60-65 (p. 62).

translations of *La Recherche*, respectively commissioned by Yilin and Yiwen;³⁴ and both translations are still work in progress.

Somewhat paradoxically, whereas the Flammarion edition directed by Jean Milly, published in ten volumes in paperback, with limited (but still quite extensive) notes and references, is the basis for the more scholarly hardback Chinese translation by Xu, the prestigious new leather-bound four-volume Pléiade edition directed by Jean-Yves Tadié, which contains an overwhelming amount of notes and textual variants from Proust's manuscript and typewritten texts, is turned into the more 'popular' paperback translation by Zhou, with footnotes being kept at a minimum.

I.4. Xu's Translation

The first three volumes of *La Recherche* are currently available in Xu's translation, i.e. *Du côté de chez Swann*, *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, and *Le Côté de Guermantes*.³⁵ As aforementioned, the physical presentation of Xu's translation based on the Flammarion edition manifests a scholarly air. This translation is certainly richer in paratextual materials.

³⁴ The Yilin translation carried out by Xu Hejin will be referred to as 'Xu's Translation'; the Yiwen translation undertaken by Zhou Kexi will be referred to as 'Zhou's Translation'. Note that the publisher Yiwen bought the copyright of only the first volume of *La Recherche*, Zhou subsequently published his translation of *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* with People's Literature Publishing House and then all three volumes he has translated so far (including *La Prisonnière*) with East China Normal University Press. All these translations are based on the new French Pléiade edition published in 1987 and will be referred to as 'Zhou's Translation'. To avoid referential confusions, I will stick to those editions published by East China Normal University Press.

³⁵ Xu's translation of the fourth volume *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (with the same publisher Yilin) was published in October 2014, a few months after the completion of this chapter. The submission deadline of this thesis has unfortunately left me little time to incorporate any further observations into this study.

Apart from the footnotes, each volume typically contains 140 to 300 pages of paratexts, which are generically broken down into the following sections:

Illustrations. Each volume includes sixteen pages of illustrations printed in colour on glossy paper. They are selected from Proust's family photos, photos of Combray and Cabourg, and notable artworks mentioned in the novel. Where an illustration corresponds to a specific passage in Proust's text, the page number is given in the caption.

Content page.

Prefaces. This section is limited to the first volume only. Xu's translation still keeps André Maurois's preface written for the first Pléiade edition of *La Recherche* in 1954, which already features in the *First Translation*. In many ways, this preface is indicative of the main research interests in Proust studies in the West in the 1950's. As soon as it was translated and included in the *First Translation*, it has become *the* point of reference in the Chinese critical, creative, as well as popular receptions of Proust. In short, Maurois claims that 'time' is the primary theme of *La Recherche* and the book begins and ends with it. He continues that the other corresponding and complementary theme is 'memory', and Proust's major contribution is that he has taught us certain ways of remembering the past. Maurois also puts considerable emphasis on Proust's health condition in relation to his monumental yet idiosyncratic work, a point which will widely circulate in the Chinese creative imagination of Proust.³⁶

The first volume notably includes a second preface written by Jean Milly for the Flammarion edition.³⁷ This preface is much more extensive (about thirty pages in the

³⁶ André Maurois, 'Préface', in *À la recherche du temps perdu I*, ed. by Pierre Clarac and André Ferré (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), pp. xiii-xv. We will examine the 'exact' influence of this preface on mainland Chinese writers in the next chapter.

³⁷ This preface was originally written in 1987 but rewritten for the new Flammarion edition in 2009. I use the new edition of Xu's translation published in 2010 which includes Milly's revised preface. Milly's central points do not change but certain paragraphs, especially

French original). In *selectively* recounting the main plots of the entire *Recherche*, Milly effectively outlines most Proustian themes, which significantly extends Maurois's thematic scope of 'time' and 'memory'. As we will discuss in the next chapter, had this preface been included in the *First Translation* (1989-1991), Proust might have inspired those mainland Chinese writers' creative imaginations rather differently.

Chronology (also limited to the first volume). This chronology, which covers Proust's family history and biography and major events in Proust studies up until 2009, significantly expands the one in the original Flammarion edition. The translator Xu has evidently consulted the chronology included in the Pléiade edition compiled by Tadié as well as the one included in Tadié's biography of Proust.³⁸

[The body of Proust's novel.]³⁹

Synoptic summary. The Chinese translation follows the wording in the Flammarion edition.

Indexes of Characters' Names/Place-names/Artwork-names. These three indexes, which do not feature in the Flammarion edition, are variably adapted from the Pléiade edition. The original proper names written in Roman letters are matched by the corresponding names written in Chinese characters phonetically transliterated by this particular translator. This solution could significantly reduce the confusion when readers cross-reference proper names in different translations. Those indexes are not included in the *First Translation*.

those at the beginning of the preface, are considerably reformulated. Instead of using section breaks as in the original preface, Milly gives a new subtitle to each section in the revised preface, which helps clarify his analysis.

³⁸ Tu Weiqun, 'Wenxue jiezuo', p. 144.

³⁹ This is not technically a *paratext* (hence the brackets). It is nevertheless included in this list in order to illustrate where the various paratexts are located in the volume in relation to the body of the novel.

Postscript. This section takes up twenty to fifty pages depending on the volume. It contains a well-researched but succinct critical introduction of a selection of themes in each volume and an account of Xu's strategy for translating certain problematic French expressions as well as his acknowledgment of the assistance and suggestions he received from colleagues. Xu specifically compares his linguistic solutions to those in the *First Translation*.

Two points of observation need highlighting: one on Milly's new preface written in 2009, and the other on the 'indexes' (especially compared to the English translation published by Penguin).

First, as suggested in our Introduction, the Chinese critical interest in Proust's work is to a certain extent culturally biased. Milly's preface could potentially benefit even the more seasoned Proust critics in China, as he repeatedly puts emphasis on the centrality of issues such as anti-Semitism and homosexuality which are too often neglected in the Chinese reception of *La Recherche*. For example, this is how Milly *thematically* summarizes the volume *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* in three sentences:

Le narrateur fait retour sur sa découverte de l'homosexualité de M. de Charlus et des relations de celui-ci avec l'ancien giletier Jupien. La scène est longuement décrite. Dans un commentaire très oratoire, la condition des homosexuels est rapprochée de celle des Juifs.⁴⁰

This kind of insightful remark fulfils more than a synoptic function, as it points out an entire area of Proustian research, with which the Chinese readership is rather unfamiliar. Out of one entire page of 'synopsis' at the back of the original volume, Milly chooses to highlight this particular analogy between Jews and homosexuals, which is, incidentally, missing from the 'synopsis' of the Pléiade edition. The final section of this chapter, as a case study, will

⁴⁰ Jean Milly, 'Préface', in *Du côté de chez Swann* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), pp. 9-39 (p. 16).

partly follow Milly's clue and examine the evolving strategies of translating (homo)sexuality into Chinese by comparing the available translations of exemplary passages such as 'Montjouvain', where the protagonist first witnesses sadism and homosexual acts.

If Maurois's preface is indicative of the relatively restrictive approaches to Proustian themes in the 1950's, still tinged by a moral sense of modesty or propriety, Milly's preface can be considered suggestive of the more 'liberal' and, to some extent, more 'honest', pluralistic readings of Proust's work from the 1980's onward. It must be noted that Milly does not accidentally stress the importance of the subject of homosexuality in *La Recherche*. Throughout the 1980's, there is a flourishing body of critical works that directly deal with this subject in Proust: J. E. Rivers's *Proust and the Art of Love* (1980), Eva Ahlstedt's *La Pudeur en crise* (1985), and Antoine Compagnon's monumental *Proust entre deux siècles* (1989), to name but a few monographs. In other words, there is an ideological shift between the two phases of Proust studies. Similarly, as will be explored later, there is also a discursive shift of (homo)sexuality from the first to the two new Chinese translations of *La Recherche*.

Second, the decision to include the three indexes in the new Chinese translation goes against the one taken by Prendergast's Penguin translation. It seems that in order to attenuate the technical problem of unstable phonetic rendition of proper names into Chinese, one simply has to compromise the quasi 'phenomenology-of-reading' approach to Proust's text in translation.⁴¹ Roland Barthes sharply articulated the powers of essentialization, citation, and exploration of Proust's proper nouns in relation to memory. He insists, 'le Nom propre est lui aussi un signe, et non bien entendu, un simple indice qui

⁴¹ Prendergast justifies the editorial decision not to include the indexes as follows: 'the experience of reading Proust's novel is co-extensive with the experience of his narrator-hero *in* the novel, namely the repeated pattern of forgetting and remembering, getting lost and refinding one's way, and that detailed "guides" sit uneasily with this important dimension of the work.' See Prendergast, 'Preface', p. x.

désignerait, sans signifier'.⁴² Both the 'natural' and 'cultural' motivations behind Proust's making of proper names explicated by Barthes – based on Western linguistic theories and the notion of Frenchness ('francité') respectively⁴³ – are bound to be lost in translation in the Chinese context which stays outside European cultural referents. Unfortunately, in this case, Proust's proper nouns can only be reduced to simple indices (as different from symbols).

Overall, the paratextual material in Xu's translation aims not only to represent a more 'authentic' Proust, but also to provide Chinese readers, especially academics and students interested in Proust, with lucid guides and useful tools to further their research. In terms of translation philosophy, Xu seems to have adopted a more 'philological' approach to Proust's text, i.e. trying to be morphologically and syntactically 'faithful' to the original,⁴⁴ similar to that proposed by the Penguin translation, which inevitably reflects a tendency towards foreignizing conception, especially given the significant linguistic gap between French and Chinese. I will demonstrate how Xu's paratextual features and translation principle noticeably differ from those adopted by Zhou analyzed in the next section and in the final case study.

I.5. Zhou's Translation

Zhou has also managed to translate three volumes of *La Recherche* (the first, second and fifth volumes): *Du côté de chez Swann*, *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, and *La Prisonnière*. Different from the first and Xu's translations, Zhou has decided on a more

⁴² Roland Barthes, 'Proust et les noms', *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture suivi de Nouveaux Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 124-25.

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 128-31.

⁴⁴ This point will be illustrated in our case-study section 'Translating Montjouvain'.

literal rendition of the title 'À la recherche du temps perdu' as *zhuixun shiqu de shiguang* (literally 'in search of lost time', 追寻逝去的时光). In the translator's preface, Zhou uses examples from *La Recherche*'s English, German, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese translations to justify this decision.⁴⁵ Just as was the case in Scott Moncrieff's first English title, *Remembrance of Things Past*, the iconic Chinese title, *Pursuing the Memory of Time/Years as Water/River*, in Michael Wood's words, 'actually contradicts one of the major claims of Proust's novel: that what we consciously summon up as remembrance is not memory, only a sort of mummified replacement of what is gone', as Michael Wood puts it.⁴⁶ Zhou specifically mentions the fact that Proust himself followed his mother's advice on literal translation when translating two of Ruskin's works,⁴⁷ although, as Elena Lozinsky more recently points out, Proust is also keen to 'soumettre l'œuvre aux lois du français' and, with 'l'intuition raffinée', 'recréer le texte selon les règles de sa propre langue',⁴⁸ thus consciously elaborating his own aesthetic through translation.

Zhou's translation, published in paperback, offers limited paratextual material. Apart from the synopsis, each volume contains one short introduction written either by Zhou himself or an invited Chinese scholar. Compared to Xu's translation, Zhou uses footnotes much more sparingly. For instance, on the first page of *Du côté de chez Swann*, whereas Zhou makes no footnote, Xu generously uses two footnotes of eight lines in total, in a rather encyclopaedic manner, to provide information on the French king François I and the Spanish king Charles V. A few pages further on, while Zhou simply footnotes 'kinéscope' as literally 'early cinematic projector', Xu further adds that it was invented by

⁴⁵ Zhou Kexi, 'Translator's Preface', p. 454.

⁴⁶ Michael Wood, 'Translations', in *Marcel Proust in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 230-240 (p. 232).

⁴⁷ Zhou Kexi, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

⁴⁸ Elena Lozinsky, *L'Intertexte fin-de-siècle dans À la recherche du temps perdu de Marcel Proust: Les Carafes dans la Vivonne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013), p. 64.

Edison and his assistant Dickson in 1891. Xu footnotes so pedantically that he even points out occasional textual differences in the *Pléiade*, although his source is still the Flammarion edition. On Page 9, Xu explicitly states that, in the *Pléiade* edition, there is no section break before the paragraph beginning with 'à Combray'. Similarly, when Swann replies to Aunt Céline that people should put something like 'Pensées de Pascal' in the *Figaro*,⁴⁹ in addition to a brief biographical entry on Pascal, Xu notes that the word 'Pensées' in the *Pléiade* is italicized referring to Pascal's work. Zhou, by contrast, makes no reference to any of these points. Xu clearly demonstrates a scholarly concern over the variants of the source text and endeavours to extract from Proust's work as much factual knowledge of Western cultural heritage as possible for the benefit of the Chinese readership. For Zhou, perhaps reading a Western canonical novel should be after all different from reading a Western cultural encyclopaedia.

Zhou's reformulation of *La Recherche*'s Chinese title may imply that he would advocate a more 'literal', 'foreignizing' and therefore philologically faithful translation of Proust's text. In reality, this observation, more often than not, goes curiously against his actual translation practice, in which a strong sense of domestication prevails. As we will see in the final case study, in order that the Chinese text flows more naturally, Zhou sometimes lengthens Proust's short sentences by adding or repeating certain adverbial phrases, which in fact changes the staccato rhythm in Proust's original prose. This is partly due to the fact that the Chinese language does not use verbal conjugation to express temporality and the translator may feel obliged to adverbially clarify the temporal situation. In modern vernacular Chinese, there is a tendency to avoid sentences which are either too short or too long. Sentences should be made long enough to provide a context in which many homonymic characters and words can be rightly understood (especially aurally); but if too

⁴⁹ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 26.

long, due to the grammatical deficiency of hypotactical structures (e.g. total lack of relative pronouns), the internal logical relations among different elements of the sentence will become confusing. Incidentally, the solution to Proust's long sentences—shared by all three translations of *La Recherche*—is mostly a paratactical one, which inevitably loses the grammatical rigour and suggestive chains of reflection in Proust's original.

We have seen Xu's scholarly paratextual efforts to represent an 'authentic' French and essentially foreign Proust in his translation. In a way, Zhou's minimization of paratexts favours domestication, as the Chinese reader is less likely to 'get distracted' by any real photos (of Combray and Cabourg) or encyclopaedic notes, which enhance the exotic appeal of Proust's work. Rather than insisting on a strict philological faithfulness, Zhou puts considerable emphasis on the *literarity* of the translated text. More concretely, Zhou often takes recourse to classical Chinese literary expressions to accommodate Proust's elegant French. In a recent conference on translating Proust, the Chinese Proust scholar, Tu Weiqun, using *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* as a primary example, meticulously demonstrates how Zhou translates some of Proust's words and expressions in an elegant language appropriated from canonical Chinese literary texts such as the ancient poem 'The Shadow of Flowers' (花影) by SU Shi (苏轼) and, once again, *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红楼梦), the great classical novel which bears many similarities with Proust's *La Recherche*.⁵⁰ It is worth pointing out that, for contemporary Chinese readers, evocation and appropriation of classical Chinese expressions in modern vernacular writing immediately and significantly increase the unfamiliar yet not exactly 'foreign' literariness of the text, a kind of 'autoexoticism'. Translating the foreign canon becomes an opportunity to rediscover

⁵⁰ Tu Weiqun, 'Les possibilités du chinois contemporain face à la richesse langagière proustienne', presented at the conference entitled 'Comment traduire Proust? Problématiques traductologiques et réflexions théoriques', which took place in Paris on 28-29 November 2013. The conference proceedings have not been published.

Chinese cultural heritage. Translation studies tends to associate this function of linguistic and cultural enrichment with foreignization.⁵¹ In Zhou's translation, the domestication of the source language also serves to enrich the target language, as classical Chinese expressions are reinvented and integrated into vernacular Chinese.

Zhou's translation strategy reflects a certain paradigmatic difference in conceptualizing translation from the established models of foreignization/domestication and self/other dichotomies that dominate Western translation discourses. Mary Orr duly compares 'Chinese and Japanese views of translation' as a 'metaphor of transformed articulations [like butterfly from its chrysalis]' with 'Western views of faithfulness and adherence to the fixities and authority of the source text'. And the former prioritizes the 'enhancement of its own cultural depths by integrating the other'.⁵² Chapter Two will further examine the extent to which such a translation philosophy would help unleash mainland Chinese writers' creative energy.

1.6. Zhou's Other Translations of *La Recherche*

In addition to the three translated volumes of *La Recherche*, Zhou has published an abridged edition of *Du côté de chez Swann* and translated two volumes of Stephane Heuet's comic book adaptation of *La Recherche* (published as one volume in China). As a cultural practice, it is very common and perfectly acceptable to adapt a literary text to other artistic media, although such adaptations are not always successful. Apart from Heuet's comic book

⁵¹ Venuti's example of 'foreignizing practice' is Germany during the classical and romantic periods, where German intellectuals were self-consciously translating and studying the 'cultural other' in search of nationhood and cultural identity. Venuti, *History of Translation*, p. 16.

⁵² Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 160.

rendition, *La Recherche*, or sometimes certain episodes of it, has been most notably adapted into films and even ballet.⁵³ However, the phenomenon of publishing one novel ‘anthologically’ – i.e. offering a selection of texts in the same literary medium, and in Zhou’s case, one volume of the novel, is rare. The selection process is particularly revealing of not only the translator’s understanding and intention, but also, to a certain degree, Chinese readers’ interest and expectation.

It may be best to start with Zhou’s ‘Abridgement Notice’ as follows:

《去斯万家那边》，是七卷本长篇小说《追寻逝去的时光》中的第一卷。

这一卷共分三个部分：贡布雷；斯万的爱情；地方与地名：地名。

全卷译成中文，约有 36 万字。这个节选本，主要对象是有意阅读者卷小说，而又苦于抽不出时间，或者面对这样一卷既不重情节又不分章节的小说，心里多少有些犹豫的读者。为了尽可能地让读者领略到普鲁斯特独特的文体魅力，节本采用“大跨度”的节选方式，即先在全书中选取将近二十个我认为特别精彩的大段，每个大段的文字一字不易，完全保留原书中的面貌，然后用尽可能简洁的文字连缀这些段落，并作一些必要的交代。

节选后的内容，就字数而言约为《去斯万家那边》全书的四分之一。⁵⁴

Du côté de chez Swann is the first of the seven volumes of the novel *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

This volume contains three parts: Combray; Swann’s Love; Place and Place-names: the Names.

The entire volume has been translated into Chinese, about 360 thousand Chinese characters. The main targeted readers of this abridged edition are those who intend to read the novel but bitterly lack the time, or those who feel rather irresolute about venturing into such a ‘chapterless’ novel which doesn’t place any emphasis on plots. In order for the Chinese reader to be able to appreciate Proust’s unique literary charm as much as possible, this abridged edition has adopted a ‘great-leap’ selecting method:

⁵³ See Martine Beugnet and Marion Schmid, *Proust at the Movies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). See also Marion Schmid, ‘Proust at the Ballet: Literature and Dance in Dialogue’. *French Studies*, 2(2013): 184-98.

⁵⁴ Zhou Kexi, ‘Abridgement Notice of *Du côté de chez Swann*’, in *Zhuixun shiqu de shiguang* (Abridged edition) (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2009). Unless otherwise stated, all English and French translations are mine.

selecting nearly twenty [eighteen to be exact] extensive passages, which I consider particularly exciting, from the original translation, and keeping them as they are; then using the most succinct language possible to link these passages together while clarifying a few necessary details [of the plot].

The content after the abridgement, in terms of the number of words, takes up a quarter of the original translation of *Du côté de chez Swann*.

Zhou's fundamental intention to attract more Chinese readers of Proust is clearly expressed in this notice. In many ways, the fact that Zhou *can* so confidently truncate Proust's "chapterless" novel which doesn't place any emphasis on plots' and almost 'authorially' turn *Du côté de chez Swann* into a coherent narrative of eighteen sections linked by a kind of theatrical aside, throws light on Zhou's perception of a certain particularity of Proust's literary aesthetic. After all, this 'anthological' adaptation has not yet happened to other long and/or difficult Western canonical novels such as *War and Peace* and *Ulysses*. The following synoptic table – based on the 'résumé' of the new Pléiade edition – gives us an overview of Zhou's selection:

Section	Synopsis
1	Combray I : Soirée de famille: les tours de jardin de la grand-mère sous la pluie (11). Le petit cabinet sentant l'iris (12). Le baiser du soir (13). Visites de Swann (13). Son père (14). Sa vie mondaine insoupçonnée de mes parents (15). La stabilité des classes sociales (16). Les taquineries de la grand-tante à l'égard de Swann (17). Les deux Swann : le bon voisin et l'homme du monde (18). Notre personnalité sociale est une création de la pensée des autres (19).
2	Lecture de George Sand, <i>François le Champi</i> (41). La voix de Maman (41). Le Combray nocturne et partiel dans la mémoire volontaire (43). Notre passé est caché en quelque objet matériel (44). La madeleine trempée dans la tasse de thé (44). Mon effort pour percer le secret du plaisir (45). Combray ressuscité par le goût de la

	madeleine (46).
3	II : L'aspect extérieur de la ville de Combray (47). Les deux chambres de ma tante Léonie (48). Son perpétuel monologue (50). Son tilleul (50). Sa table servant d'officine et de maître-autel (51). Françoise (52). Maman et Françoise (53). Le matin, conversation entre ma tante et Françoise sur de petits événements (54). Tout le monde se connaît à Combray (55). L'église : son porche, ses vitraux (58).
4	Son abside (61), son clocher (62). La comparaison avec d'autres clochers (64). Les silhouettes changeantes du clocher de Combray (65).
5	Le style de Bergotte (92). Ses premiers admirateurs: l'amie de ma mère, le docteur du Boulbon et moi (93). Bergotte et moi (94). Swann lié avec Bergotte (96). L'amitié de Mlle Swann avec Bergotte la rend prestigieuse à mes yeux (98).
6	<i>Du côté de chez Swann.</i> Le coucher du soleil au moment du retour (131). Les deux côtés (132) : l'idéal de la vue de la plaine et l'idéal du paysage de rivière (133). Les lilas de Tansonville (134). Le parc Swann (134). Son étang (134). Le chemin des aubépines (136). Le coquelicot (137). L'épine rose (137). L'apparition de la petite Swann (139).
7	<i>Du côté de Guermantes.</i> Paysage de rivière : la Vivonne (164). Le Pont-Vieux, le pêcheur inconnu, le vieux château en ruine (165). Les boutons-d'or (165). Les carafes dans la Vivonne (166). Les plantes d'eau (166). Les nymphéas (167). Le goûter (168). La jeune femme dans la maison de plaisance (168).
8	La duchesse de Guermantes dans la chapelle de Gilbert le Mauvais (172). Déception (172). Ses regards (174). Son sourire (175). Le pressentiment de la révélation des moments privilégiés (176). Les impressions cachées sous les sensations (177). Les clochers de Martinville (177) ; première joie de la création littéraire (179). Composition d'un poème en prose (179).
9	<i>Un Amour de Swann.</i> Le Credo des 'fidèles' (185). Le déroulement des soirées (186). Odette fait inviter Swann par les Verdurin (188).

10	Swann amené chez les Verdurin (196). <i>Le soirée Verdurin</i> . Le docteur Cottard (197). Swann fait excellente impression (199). Saniette (200). La tante du pianiste (201).
11	Mme Verdurin sur son perchoir (202). La sonate en <i>fa</i> dièse (203). Odette et Swann sur le canapé de Beauvais (204). Swann a déjà entendu, l'année précédente, la sonate exécutée au piano et au violon (205). La petite phrase (207). Vinteuil (210).
12	Enquête sur les activités d'Odette (308). Swann désire mourir (311). L'Odette d'aujourd'hui et l'Odette d'autrefois (314), que Swann évite de comparer, se superposeront à la soirée de Mme de Saint-Euverte (316).
13	<i>Le soirée Saint-Euverte</i> . Indifférent à tout ce qui n'est pas son amour, il contemple une suite de tableaux : les grooms (317) ; les valets de pied (138) ; les monocles (321). On joue un air d' <i>Orphée</i> et <i>Saint François</i> de Liszt ; Mme de Cambremer et Mme de Franquetot (322) ; la musique de Chopin (326).
14	Le violon (341). Le langage de Vinteuil, ce frère inconnu et sublime (342). Le dernier mouvement de la sonate (345).
15	Mme Cottard déclare à Swann qu'Odette l'adore (369), ce qui hâte la guérison de ce dernier. L'affaiblissement de l'amour de Swann (371).
16	Noms de pays : Le Nom : Les chambres de Combray (376). La chambre du Grand Hôtel de la Plage de Balbec (376). Le Balbec réel et le Balbec rêvé (376). Le Balbec décrit par Legrandin et par Swann (377). Le beau train généreux d'une heure vingt-deux (378). Rêve de printemps florentin (379). Les mots et les noms (380). Parme, Florence et Balbec (380).
17	<i>Aux Champs-Élysées</i> . Une fillette aux yeux roux (387). Le nom de Gilberte (387). Les parties de barres (388). Le temps qu'il fait (388). Irai-je aux Champs-Élysées (388) ? Jours de neige (390). La lectrice des <i>Débats</i> (391). L'apparition de Gilberte, courant à toute vitesse (390). 'Non, non, on sait bien que vous aimez mieux être dans le camp de Gilberte' (391). Désir de la revoir (392). La Gilberte rêvée et la Gilberte réelle sont comme deux êtres différents (394). Marques d'amitié : la bille d'agate (395).

18	Pèlerinage avec Françoise à la maison des Swann, près du Bois (408). L'allée des Acacias (409). Les élégances féminines (410). Différentes toilettes de Mme Swann (411). 'Odette de Crécý' (412). Traversée du Bois un matin de novembre 1913 (414). Les différentes parties du Bois (414). Le changement des modes (417). On ne peut retrouver dans la réalité les tableaux de la mémoire (418). Tout est fugitif, comme les années (419).
----	---

La Recherche's famous prologue is perhaps one of the most striking omissions in Zhou's selection. It is only summarized in the following words:

有很长一段时间，叙述者马塞尔睡得挺早。夜间醒来，在周围的一片黑暗中，回忆的闸门打开了。他把夜的大部分时间，用来回想往昔的生活。此刻的思绪回到了巴黎的姑婆家。⁵⁵

For a long time, the narrator Marcel goes to bed quite early. When he wakes up at night, surrounded by darkness, memory opens its door. He spends a large part of the night recalling his past life. At this moment, his thought is directed back to his grand-aunt's house in Paris.

For many Proust scholars, this prologue is indispensable to the understanding of the architectonics of Proust's *Recherche* as a whole. It is a crucial point of departure to explore Proust's narrative technique, notably the distinction between the narrator's and the protagonist's voices. The fact that Zhou chooses to begin his selection with 'soirée de famille' almost necessarily implies that the narrative is reconstructed fundamentally from the perspective of the protagonist rather than the narrator.⁵⁶ In the 'aside', Zhou clearly blends the identities of the narrator, the protagonist, and the author together, which would irritate many Proust scholars. A practical justification for this significant omission could be that the narrator in the prologue makes references to many other 'chambres' throughout *La Recherche*, which may not seem immediately relevant to the subsequent content of the

⁵⁵ Zhou Kexi, *Abridged Edition*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Zhou's final section does, however, include the last few pages of *Du côté de chez Swann*, where the narrator's voice re-enters.

first volume. Indeed, comparing the above abridged synopsis with the original one in the new Pléiade, we can observe that passages which contain extensive references to other volumes of *La Recherche*, such as the reverie of Venice, are often omitted. There seems to be a conscientious effort to make this abridged volume as independent as possible from the rest of the novel, so that readers of this volume may be less disturbed by any apparent sense of ‘incompleteness’. Incidentally, some Western readers of Proust may be slightly amused to notice how Zhou’s omission echoes, at least superficially, Alfred Humblot’s candid remark in his correspondence with Louis de Robert (who acted as an intermediary between Proust and the editor at Ollendorff), ‘cher ami, je suis peut-être bouché à l’émeri, mais je ne puis comprendre qu’un monsieur puisse employer trente pages à décrire comment il se tourne et se retourne dans son lit avant de trouver le sommeil. J’ai beau me prendre la tête entre les mains’.⁵⁷

In Zhou’s selection, there is a general tendency to favour descriptive passages on the external physical world over passages exploring human intimacy and inner psychology. Sections 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8—i.e. five out of eight selected passages from ‘Combray’—dwell on the natural landscapes and physical objects. In comparison, Proust’s subtle portrayal of the *drame du coucher* is kept at the minimum. The paragraph which explains the consoling function of the mother’s kiss (Section 2, ‘le baiser du soir’), is only *preliminary* to the actual *drame*. The complex development of Swann’s obsessive love for Odette is largely truncated. The scenario jumps directly from Swann’s first hearing of the ‘petite phrase’ to ‘La soirée Saint-Euverte’ at the end of which Swann hears the ‘dernier mouvement de la sonate’. The nearly fifty pages of Swann’s psychological struggle, especially in relation to his jealousy, are summarized in two sentences: ‘informed that Odette is a kept woman, Swann feels unwell and sad. The Verdurins’ salon now becomes an obstacle for Swann and Odette’s

⁵⁷ Cited in J.-Y. Tadié, *Marcel Proust* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 689.

meeting'.⁵⁸ Given such a selection preference, it is not surprising that the Montjouvain passage which features the first description of a homosexual act in the novel has been largely ignored by Zhou. As aforementioned, the importance of homo- and bi-sexuality in Proust's work is poorly received in China.

Zhou's selection necessarily rearranges the narrative movement and temporality of Proust's original work, which is most systematically elaborated by Gérard Genette in *Figures III*. Genette duly observes four narrative movements in *La Recherche: ellipse (temporelle), pause descriptive, la scène, and récit sommaire*.⁵⁹ Zhou's selection principle evidently favours those Proustian moments of *pause descriptive* which reflect 'un récit et une analyse de l'activité perceptive du personnage contemplant, de ses impressions, découvertes progressives, changements de distance et de perspective, erreurs et corrections, enthousiasmes ou déceptions, etc'.⁶⁰ Different from dramatic scenes in traditional narratives, Genette characterizes *scènes proustiennes* as the ones in which 'l'action [...] s'efface presque complètement au profit de la caractérisation psychologique et sociale'.⁶¹ The dominance of the scene in the novel's internal organization has been examined in details by Jean-Yves Tadié in *Proust et le roman*.⁶² Zhou, by contrast, frequently cuts out extensive details in the already very limited number of selected scenes. Given the role of the Proustian scene as 'foyer temporel' or 'pôle magnétique pour toutes sortes d'informations et de circonstances annexes',⁶³ the narrative movement caused by the scene is arguably the greatest temporal change in Zhou's selection. Instead, much of the volume's internal organization has to rely on Zhou's added 'asides' to push the narrative forward, as

⁵⁸ Zhou Kexi, *Abridged Edition*, 116-7. 得知奥黛特是个靠情人供养的女人，斯万感到痛苦、忧郁。威尔迪兰夫人的沙龙，现在成了斯万和奥黛特约会的障碍。

⁵⁹ Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 128-144.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 134.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 143.

⁶² Jean-Yves Tadié, *Proust et le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), p. 372-383.

⁶³ Genette, *Figures III*, p. 143.

they are used to both sustain a clear temporal frame—Genette’s *ellipse explicite* (e.g. ‘quelques années passèrent’), and provide an acceleration from one section to another—Genette’s *récit sommaire*. Thus Zhou’s interventions inevitably render Proust’s narrative technique much less original.⁶⁴

Although Zhou states in the ‘Abridgement Notice’ that his ‘asides’ are meant to ensure smooth transitions between sections, ‘clarifying a few necessary details [of the plot]’, they serve at times as ‘a reader’s guide’ to, in Zhou’s words, ‘Proust’s unique literary charm’, far more than a mere synopsis. Consider his following clarification ahead of ‘lecture de George Sand’ in Section 2:

有一天晚上，妈妈留在小马塞尔的卧室里陪他，这个温馨的夜晚留在了记忆之中。

但叙述者知道，理性的回忆是无法保存往事的。往事隐匿在智力范围之外，在某个我们意想不到的物质对象之中。只有不由自主的回忆，才能让往事从记忆中清晰地浮现出来。小玛德莱娜唤起的无意识联想，就是这样一种不由自主的回忆。⁶⁵

One evening, Maman stays with little Marcel in his bedroom. This warm and sweet evening stays in his memory.

But the narrator understands that it’s impossible to preserve the past through rational recollection. The past is hidden outside the realm of intelligence, in some material object that we cannot anticipate. Only involuntary remembering can enable the past to emerge vividly from the memory. The unconscious associations evoked by the little Madeleine are this kind of involuntary memory.

Zhou briefly introduces a central Proustian concept in this passage, namely, the distinction that the narrator makes between voluntary and involuntary memories. This effectively makes the following section—from ‘lecture de George Sand’ leading up to the taste of the madeleine—a detailed demonstration of Zhou’s initial point. Such introductions give the

⁶⁴ In comparison, as we will see later, this kind of ‘asides’ are completely absent in SHEN Zhiming’s *Essential Selection*.

⁶⁵ Zhou Kexi, *Abridged Edition*, p. 13-14.

selected passage a clear *purpose* which many ‘confused’ readers of *La Recherche* perhaps often wonder about.

Does Zhou’s strategy help Chinese readers ‘appreciate Proust’s unique literary charm’? On the one hand, readers are indeed spared the frequent anxiety of missing Proust’s seemingly banal plot as we get lost in the author’s textual labyrinth, and we can consequently rechannel that energy to Proust’s minute textual details. This kind of literary appreciation, on the other hand, can only stay superficial. A much deeper, or more *affective*, appreciation of *La Recherche*, will have to precisely involve the unsettling experience of reading the novel, which is, to return to Prendergast’s remark, ‘co-extensive with the experience of his narrator-hero *in* the novel, namely the repeated pattern of forgetting and remembering, getting lost and refinding one’s way, and that detailed “guides” sit uneasily with this important dimension of the work’.⁶⁶

As mentioned before, Zhou also translated the first two volumes of Stéphane Heuet’s comic book adaption of *La Recherche*, published in China as one single volume.⁶⁷ Heuet’s adaption is a highly condensed visualization of Proust’s work. Rather than selecting *passages* from *Du côté de chez Swann* like Zhou, Heuet selects Proust’s original *sentences and phrases* as the texts appearing in balloons and captions.⁶⁸ Heuet’s seventy-page illustration actually covers more plots than Zhou’s two-hundred-page selection. Interestingly, Zhou’s translation of Heuet’s comic book adaptation—published three years before Zhou’s own abridged edition—does not seem to have influenced Zhou’s choice of

⁶⁶ Christopher Prendergast, ‘Preface’, p. x.

⁶⁷ Four volumes of Heuet’s adaption are currently available. But only two volumes were available in 2006.

⁶⁸ In a recent interview, Heuet frankly admits that there are cases in which he is obliged to ‘corriger’ Proust’s text in order to make it more comprehensible. ‘Stéphane Heuet et Daniel Mesguich’ on *Radio Française Internationale* (RFI) broadcasted on 5 February 2014. <<http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20140205-2-stephane-heuet-daniel-mesguich>> [accessed on 3 December 2014].

passages. Heuet tries to include as many plots as possible, which is, of course, very different from Zhou's intention. However, Zhou would have been aware of the *proportion* that Heuet gives to certain scenes in his adaptation. In many ways, the disparity between Zhou's selection of what he considers to be 'particularly exciting' passages and Heuet's illustrative emphases, indirectly reflects a broader cultural and *temporal* difference in the reception of Proust's work, especially in terms of socio-political ideologies, which I briefly touched upon in the Introduction. The Montjouvain passage is an excellent example: whereas Zhou completely cuts it out from Section 6 ('Du côté de chez Swann'), Heuet devotes three out of seventy pages—proportionally even more significant than Proust's original—to this first homosexual scene in *La Recherche*. Our final case study of the Montjouvain passage will precisely focus on the gradually evolving translation strategy and reception of Proust's representation of homosexuality in China.

I.7. Shen Zhiming's *Essential Selection*

Zhou is not the only nor the first Chinese scholar who has decided on an abridged version of Proust's work. Shen Zhiming selectively translated *La Recherche* back in 1992, *seemingly* condensing the entire novel (around 2300 pages according to one edition of the *First Translation*) into a single volume of nearly 550 pages. Shen's *Essential Selection* was published under a rather different framework: it is only one out of seventy contributions to a much wider translation project entitled 'Twentieth-Century French Literature Series' directed by LIU Mingjiu. The publisher's statement on the cover makes the purpose of this series crystal clear:

本译丛以系统地介绍 20 世纪法国文学为任务，选择各种倾向、各种流派、各种艺术风格，有影响、有特色的作品，以期为中国读者勾勒出 20 世纪文学的一个比较清晰的轮廓。

The present series undertakes the task of systemically introducing twentieth-century French literature, selecting influential and distinctive works that cover a wide variety of tendencies, schools, and artistic styles. We hope to be able to offer Chinese readers a relatively clear overview of twentieth-century French literature.

This statement is further elaborated in the general preface of the series by Liu (newly written in 2010), in which he surveys the various developments of twentieth-century French literature (and their associated writers): naturalism, psychological realism, psychological modernism, the *nouveau roman*, resistance and left-wing progressive literatures, philosophical literatures (e.g. absurdism, existentialism), and so on. Liu also reveals that this ambitious translation project was in many ways born out of public demand. Numerous established Chinese writers sent in queries regarding the progress of the project, and the series has been ‘particularly beloved of creative writing circles’.⁶⁹ This latter observation will become increasingly important when we discuss the ideological implications of contemporary Chinese writers’ intertextual practice in Chapter Two.

The second preface, written in 1990 by the same author, is dedicated to Proust’s work alone, which, once again, manifests strong influence from André Maurois’s preface for the 1954 Pléiade edition of *La Recherche*, as well as his critical work, *De Proust à Camus*. While dedicating fifteen pages to introducing many artistic particularities of *La Recherche*, Liu as the general editor of the book series ostensibly tries to tone down any excessive glorification of Proust’s work: ‘if one thinks that the literature of our century still hasn’t got out of Proust’s shadow, this is obviously an exaggeration; but it won’t indeed be

⁶⁹ LIU Mingjiu, ‘Pulustite Chuanqi’ (Proust’s Legend), *Essential Selection*, trad. SHEN Zhiming, p. 1. 特别得到了文学创作界的青睐。

exaggerating if we say that Proust, in the art of the novel, invented something new'.⁷⁰ Liu's main intention is to critically introduce the 'grand narrative' of twentieth-century French literary history; and rather than tending to idolize the writer, readers are encouraged to perceive Proust as fundamentally in relation to many *other* writers before, around, and after his time—a kind of 'Proust among the stars', to borrow the title of Malcolm Bowie's book.

Despite the general editor's references to Maurois's preface, the translator of *Essential Selection*, Shen, specifies, however, that the present translation is based on the new 1987 Pléiade edition of *La Recherche*:

[...] 各章标题除部分采用原著卷目，其余是选译者参照《七星文库》编者编写的提要段落标题所加的。为了尊重原著，各段编排、句号分布都未作变动（除了极个别的地方），另外，为了不改变句号，不得不在冗长的句子中扩大分号的用途，尚希见谅。⁷¹

[...] some of the chapter titles are derived from the original volume titles, others are adapted from the synopsis provided by the editor of the Pléiade edition. In order to respect the original, no change has been made about the arrangements of paragraphs and full stops (only with a few exceptions). Furthermore, to avoid changing full stops, the translator has to increase of the use of semi-colon in long sentences, and hopes that readers can understand [this decision].

Therefore, an important difference between Shen's *Essential Selection* and the *First Translation* (despite the former's being published only one year after that of the latter) is that of the source text. Moreover, Shen proposes a solution to Proust's long sentences, which may render his Chinese translation syntactically unidiomatic to the degree that he feels obliged to apologize in advance. It is interesting that Shen should show such keen awareness of Proust's original punctuation. As we know, one remarkable difference

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 如果认为我们这个世纪的文学还没有走出普鲁斯特所投射的身影，那显然是夸大其词，但如果说普鲁斯特在小说艺术中发明了一些新的东西，那确实并不言之过分。

⁷¹ Shen Zhiming, *Essential Selection*, p. 2.

between the old and new Pléiade editions is the latter's editorial decision to get rid of the commas added by the former editors in their attempt to increase the readability of Proust's complex syntax and unconventional use of French punctuation. But in any case, Shen still has to add more commas and semi-colons in his Chinese translation, even though he claims to be 'faithful' to the number of full stops in the original.

However, to say that Shen's *Essential Selection* condenses the *entire Recherche* is actually quite misleading. In reality, the selection is informed by Proust's tripartite vision of the novel in 1913, namely, *Du côté de chez Swann*, *Le Côté de Guermantes*, and *Le Temps retrouvé*. Shen's volume comprises seven chapters as follows, which somehow gives Chinese readers an illusion that each chapter may correspond to one volume of the entire *Recherche*: 'Combray' (but Shen's translation literally reads 'Combray Night'), 'Du côté de chez Swann', 'Du côté de Guermantes',⁷² 'Un Amour de Swann', 'La Soirée chez les Guermantes', 'Le Temps retrouvé I' (largely covering 'Adoration Perpétuelle' and 'Le Bal de tête'), and 'Le Temps retrouvé II' (the very end of the novel where the narrator decides to write *the book*).⁷³

Finally, to pave way for our following case study, it must be pointed out that, unlike Zhou's selection, Shen does not omit the Montjouvain passage. Shen's individual omissions of certain details of Mlle Vinteuil and her lover's sexual act and his tendency to tone down or even evade Proust's sexual vocabulary will form interesting comparisons and contrasts with other Chinese translations. However, perhaps for technical rather than ideological reasons, the passages portraying explicit male homosexual acts notably involving Saint-Loup, Charlus, and Morel, which feature prominently in *Le Temps retrouvé*, are entirely cut

⁷² It refers to the section included in the first volume, *Du côté de chez Swann*, as different from the title of the fourth volume, *Le Côté de Guermantes*, which appears later.

⁷³ The first edition of the *First Translation* was published in seven volumes. Its later editions were more often published in three volumes instead, which interestingly echoes Proust's design of a trilogy in 1913.

out in *Essential Selection*, since the characters, Saint-Loup and Morel, do not really figure in Proust's tripartite vision of the novel.

I.8. Translating Montjouvain: A Case Study

The Montjouvain scene is an ideal point of departure to broach the subject of Chinese sexual discourses for mainly two reasons: first, its thematic particularity in Proust's work and its thematic singularity in *Du côté de chez Swann*, notably sadism and homosexuality; second, its wide availability across all major Chinese translations of *La Recherche* (except for Zhou's abridged translation of *Du côté de chez Swann*), which cover a time span from the late 1980's until now.⁷⁴ But before venturing into the area of evolving Chinese sexual discourses, let us take the opportunity to substantiate some of the observations on the different Chinese translations outlined in previous sections, with examples from the passage in question.

First, all available translations demonstrate a consistent reliance on a *paratactic* approach to Proust's long and essentially *hypotactic* sentences. In practice, the translators either resolutely break them into shorter and independent sentences, which would seem more 'natural' to the Chinese reading habit; or they significantly increase the use of commas or semicolons in the translated text, which creates a superficial semblance of Proust's notoriously long sentences. Of course, whether the latter option is syntactically more 'faithful' to Proust's original is very much debatable. Even with an increased use of commas or semicolons, the syntactical structure of the translated text remains essentially

⁷⁴ In other words, as part of the first volume, this passage has already been translated even in current translations which are not yet completed.

paratactic as the various syntactical elements within one sentence do not necessarily bear any *subordinate relations* with each other. Consider the following sentence:

C'était par un temps très chaud ; mes parents, qui avaient dû s'absenter pour toute la journée, m'avaient dit de rentrer aussi tard que je voudrais; et étant allé jusqu'à la mare de Montjouvain où j'aimais revoir les reflets du toit de tuile, je m'étais étendu à l'ombre et endormi dans les buissons du talus qui domine la maison, là où j'avais attendu mon père autrefois, un jour qu'il était allé voir M. Vinteuil.⁷⁵

Proust employs four commas, two semicolons, and one full stop. Let's compare it to Shen's translation in *Essential Selection*:

这一天，天气非常热，我的父母要出门一整天，对我讲，我随便多晚回家都行；我一直走到蘑菇万的池塘边，我喜欢观看池中瓦屋顶的倒影，我爬到俯瞰万特伊先生那栋房子的山坡上，以前有一天我父亲来看望他时我就在这里等候的，我躺在山坡灌木丛的阴凉处，居然睡着了。⁷⁶

Ce jour, il fait très chaud, mes parents sont dehors pendant toute la journée, me disant, que je peux rentrer aussi tard que je voudrais; je marche jusqu'à la mare de Montjouvain, j'aime revoir les reflets du toit de tuile, je monte dans la colline dominant la maison de M. Vinteuil, auparavant un jour [que] mon père lui rend visite j'attends ici, je m'étends à l'ombre dans les buissons du talus dans la colline, en fait m'endors.⁷⁷

As we know, Shen claims to be most 'faithful' to Proust's use of full stops – but full stops *only* – and he also apologizes for his overuse of semicolons (in this particular passage he actually uses fewer semicolons than Proust's original). So in his translation, there are nine

⁷⁵ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 157.

⁷⁶ Shen, *Essential Selection*, p. 75.

⁷⁷ I have re-translated this sentence – and hereafter – from Chinese back to French to help clarify my points, especially for the benefits of those readers whose knowledge of the Chinese language is limited. The retranslation tries to be as 'literal' as possible, i.e. lexically and syntactically as close as possible to Proust's translated text in Chinese. However, in terms of verbal conjugation, only the present tense is consistently used, as the Chinese language does not employ this grammatical feature to indicate temporality. Likewise, relative pronouns are added only out of grammatical necessity and are indicated accordingly. Finally, the use of punctuation in the retranslation corresponds exactly to that in the Chinese translation, which may not at all conform to its usual French usage.

commas (as opposed to four in Proust's original) and one semicolon (instead of two). Parataxis often implies a greater flexibility to rearrange syntactical elements, which is shown in the reordering of the second half of the sentence. Other translations demonstrate similar rearrangements. However, it is quite intriguing as to why Shen so absolutely prioritizes full stops over other punctuation such as commas and semicolons in his 'respect' for the original. Reading the translated text, one would hardly perceive any change of prosaic rhythm if we replace at least one or two of the commas with full stops, since Proust's original rhythm—heavily dependent on hypotactical constructions—is already broken once the relative pronouns have been removed.

In sharp contrast to Shen's 'full-stop fidelity' is Zhou's sinicized re-punctuation:

那天挺热，家里的大人有事外出，整天不在家，所以对我说爱玩多久都行。我一路来到蒙舒凡的那个池塘，我爱看那小乌瓦顶的倒影。看着看着，我躺在灌木的阴影里，不知不觉睡着了；这个斜坡正对着凡特伊先生的屋子，我跟父亲一起去看凡特伊先生那回，我曾经在这儿等过父亲。⁷⁸

Ce jour-là [il] fait assez chaud, les grandes personnes de la famille sont chargés d'affaires dehors, pendant toute la journée absents, donc me disant de jouer aussi longtemps que je voudrais. Je marche jusqu'à la mare de Montjouvain, j'aime revoir les reflets du toit de tuile. En regardant, je m'étends à l'ombre de buissons du talus, m'endors à mon insu; cette colline fait face à la maison de M. Vinteuil, j'accompagne mon père pour voir M. Vinteuil autrefois, un jour [que] j'attends ici mon père.

Zhou breaks Proust's original sentence into three, with seven commas in total and one semicolon which does not correspond to either of the two semicolons found in Proust's original. If we compare the above two translations, a similar paratactic rhythm – whether marked by commas, semicolons, or full stops – is perceivable. The distinctive grammatical and semantic values ascribed to each of these punctuation marks are less rigid in Chinese than most of their European counterparts. And Zhou's re-punctuation of the translated text

⁷⁸ Zhou's Translation, vol. 1, p. 160.

clearly reflects Chinese reading habits. In his discussion with the established writer Chen Cun (陈村) on Proust, Zhou suggests that he would seriously consider breaking up sentences which contain more than twenty-four Chinese characters as he tries to be more 'considerate' for the reader.⁷⁹ In fact, Zhou not only breaks Proust's long sentences, he also takes the liberty of breaking Proust's long paragraphs.⁸⁰ Zhou's domestication-leaning translation strategy is further reflected in his frequent utilization of Chinese idiomatic and often culturally targetted expressions: 'les grandes personnes de la famille' (家里的大人) for 'mes parents', 'chargés d'affaires dehors' (有事外出) pour 's'absenter', 'jouer' (玩) instead of 'rentrer', and the added 'à mon insu' (不知不觉 literally 'without either knowing or sensing'). As a result, there is an increase in *fluency* which facilitates the Chinese reader's cognitive processing of the text.

Meanwhile, in other translations (except Shen's *Essential Selection*), there are infrequent cases in which Proust's short paratactical sentences are technically *lengthened* by a change of punctuation from full stop to comma or semicolon. For example, the sentence, 'bientôt son amie entra', may have been considered 'too short and simple' or 'too plain' as an independent sentence in Chinese. Both Zhou and the translators of the *First Translation* take the liberty of changing Proust's full stop to comma, so that the sentence as one element can paratactically flow into the next sentence, forming a chain of

⁷⁹ This is Zhou's original remark: 'I'm being a bit considerate, because I hope that the book I've been translating will still have readers. I translate for the reader.' 我是有点仁，因为觉得我翻译出来的书还是希望有读者读的。我是为读者翻译的。Zhou Kexi, 'Chen Cun', p. 196; p. 198.

⁸⁰ Although it is not reflected in the Montjouvain passage. In the 'Femme d'une Tante' passage from *La Prisonnière* which will be analysed later, Zhou notably turns all the long conversations within one paragraph into independent paragraphs according to the speaker.

actions, i.e. 'bientôt son amie entre, Mlle Vinteuil l'accueille sans se lever, ses deux mains derrière la tête et se recule sur le bord opposé du sofa comme pour lui faire une place'.⁸¹

Another syntactic feature worthy of our attention is the translator's frequent insertion of additional adverbial phrases as well as conjunctions. This is particularly the case in Zhou's translation. For example, as he translates Proust's following sentence, 'elle était en grand deuil, car son père était mort depuis peu. Nous n'étions pas allés la voir [...]',⁸² Zhou specifically repeats 'pendant le deuil', or more literally, 'pendant la période où elle pleure son père' (丧父期间), at the beginning of the second sentence.⁸³ Presumably, the added adverbial phrase approximately reflects Proust's use of the pluperfect tense in the original, as the Chinese language does not use verbal conjugation to express temporality. Another example is found in the paragraph beginning with 'dans l'échancrure de son corsage de crêpe Mlle Vinteuil sentit que son amie piquait un baiser',⁸⁴ before which Zhou adds the expression, 'la phrase venant de se terminer' (话音刚落),⁸⁵ repeating the word 'phrase' from the last sentence of the precedent paragraph. This 'phrase', which refers to 'Mademoiselle me semble avoir des pensées bien lubriques, ce soir', is already a repetition from their previous experience, 'qu'elle [Mlle Vinteuil] avait entendue autrefois dans la bouche de son amie'.⁸⁶ By linking the two paragraphs with an added expression, Zhou effectively enhances the logical progression of Mlle Vinteuil and her girlfriend's erotic foreplay from words to actions, from 'une phrase' to 'un baiser'. Adverbial (temporal,

⁸¹ Zhou's Translation, vol. 1, p. 160; Proust, *RTP I*, p. 158.

⁸² Proust, *RTP I*, p. 157.

⁸³ Zhou's Translation, vol. 1, p. 160.

⁸⁴ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 160.

⁸⁵ Zhou's Translation, vol. 1, p. 163.

⁸⁶ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 159-60.

spatial, and sequential) additions as such are consistently applied in Zhou's translation. To a certain extent, they also contribute to the elongation of Proust's sentences in translation.⁸⁷

However, despite all the scholarly and collaborative efforts, technical mistranslations persist in all the available translations. We do not even have to look beyond the Montjouvain passage for examples.

Errors in the *First Translation* do not necessarily get corrected in the new translations. For example, when Mlle Vinteuil tries to seduce her girlfriend to join her on the sofa, she seems to 'ainsi lui [her girlfriend] imposer une *attitude* qui lui était peut-être importune. Elle pensa que son amie aimerait peut-être mieux être loin d'elle sur une chaise'.⁸⁸ 'Attitude' in this context leans towards the meaning of 'bodily position or posture' rather than 'a settled way of thinking or feeling', although the former *could* potentially reflect the latter. Nevertheless, the Chinese word used in both the *First Translation* and Xu's translation, *taidu* (态度), only refers to the latter, which appears strange in the translated text. *Zitai* (姿态), literally 'posture and attitude', would be a near equivalent of 'attitude' in this case. When translating the sentence, 'elle [the narrator's mother] éprouvait un véritable chagrin et songeait avec effroi à celui *autrement amer que* devait éprouver Mlle Vinteuil tout mêlé du remords d'avoir à peu près tué son père',⁸⁹ both Xu and translators of the *First Translation* misunderstand the construction 'autrement + adjective + que' as '(utterly) different from', which almost reverses the meaning of the

⁸⁷ Remarkably, a few details of this 'erotic foreplay' appear to be taken out in Shen's *Essential Selection*. I will soon return to this observation.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 158. Italics are mine.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Italics are mine.

original text. The mother is simply showing compassion and thinking ‘with horror of the *far more bitter* sorrow that Mlle Vinteuil must be feeling’.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, both Xu’s and Zhou’s individual translations also contain mistakes which do not feature in the *First Translation*. For instance, when the narrator spots Mlle Vinteuil’s room after waking up from an afternoon slumber, he remarks, ‘en face de moi, à quelques centimètres de moi, dans cette chambre où son père avait reçu le mien et dont elle avait fait son petit salon à elle’.⁹¹ Zhou mistranslates ‘le mien’ (i.e. the narrator’s father) as the protagonist-narrator himself in Chinese, and throws in extra information on the nature of Mlle Vinteuil’s room by rendering ‘son petit salon à elle’ as ‘le petit salon qu’elle utilise maintenant pour recevoir son amie secrète’,⁹² hence being more explicit about Mlle Vinteuil’s lesbian relationship with her friend. Likewise, the narrator observes the family trait of blue eyes passing on from the grandmother to the father and to Mlle Vinteuil as follows: ‘c’était la ressemblance de son visage, les yeux bleus de *sa mère à lui qu’il lui* avait transmis comme un bijou de famille’.⁹³ Proust’s use of pronouns can appear indeed rather confusing. The first ‘lui’, which is the stressed pronoun for the masculine third person singular, in fact refers to the father, and so does the ‘il’ after the relative pronoun ‘que’; the second ‘lui’, which is the indirect object that can be either masculine or feminine, should refer to the daughter in the context. Xu mistranslates this family heritage as ‘the blue eyes of *her* mother’ rather than the grandmother on her father’s side, which clashes with Proust’s subtle portrayal of Mlle Vinteuil’s complex sadist psychology, especially in relation to her antagonism to the father, concretized in her spitting on the father’s portrait as part

⁹⁰ This quotation is adapted from Lydia Davis’s English translation but italics are mine. Davis, *The Way by Swann’s*, p. 161. The phrase used in the *First Translation* is ‘当然苦涩之情完全不同’ (p. 117); Xu’s Translation ‘只是痛苦得并不相同’ (p. 160).

⁹¹ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 157.

⁹² Zhou’s Translation, vol. 1, p. 160. 这个房间她现在改作接待密友的小客厅了

⁹³ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 162. Italics are mine.

of the ‘profanations rituelles’⁹⁴ to gain sexual pleasure with her girlfriend. In Douglas B. Saylor’s words,

spitting on the replication of her father’s appearance is like spitting on herself. The father’s portrait serves as an image of the father, but also an exteriorization of the ego. Through identification with the father, spitting on the portrait becomes a rejection of her own self.⁹⁵

As aforementioned, both errors are absent from the *First Translation*.

Of course, lesbianism or homosexuality in general is not necessarily a comfortable subject. It is one of the areas of *La Recherche* which frequently received vehement criticism in Proust’s life time, and certain translations of the novel are still censored for that reason today. A concrete example is found in a passage we have already touched upon:

‘Mademoiselle me semble avoir des pensées bien lubriques, ce soir’, finit-elle par dire, répétant sans doute une phrase qu’elle avait entendue autrefois dans la bouche de son amie.

*Dans l’échancrure de son corsage de crêpe Mlle Vinteuil sentit que son amie piquait un baiser, elle poussa un petit cri, s’échappa, et elles se poursuivirent en sautant, faisant voleter leurs larges manches comme des ailes et gloussant et piaillant comme des oiseaux amoureux.*⁹⁶

The translator of *Essential Selection*, Shen, notably cuts out the sentence in italics and combines the two paragraphs together:

“我觉得小姐今晚春情大发，”她终于迸出这么一句，大概是重复以前从她女友口中听来的一声，赶紧躲开，于是两人跳跳蹦蹦追逐起来，宽大的衣袖像翅膀似的飞舞，她们格格地笑着，喳喳叫着，活像两只调情的小鸟。⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 160.

⁹⁵ Douglas B. Saylor, *The Sodomasochistic Homotext: Readings in Sade, Balzac and Proust* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 93.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Italics are mine.

⁹⁷ Shen, *Essential Selection*, pp. 77-78. I have underlined the change of punctuation from full stop to comma.

For someone who claims to be faithful to Proust's use of full stop, this change of paragraph and punctuation has to be an exception. Shen is evidently not being entirely honest when he affirms in the translator's note that the selected passages or paragraphs are 'absolutely complete, without any expurgation'.⁹⁸ As can be seen, the concrete action of the 'lesbian kiss' is left out, leaving only the more figurative part of the 'foreplay'. How the Proustian themes of homosexuality and sadism are translated into Chinese is our next investigation.

I.9. Sexuality in Translation: Montjouvain and Beyond

The appearance of the Montjouvain scene may seem somewhat *aléatoire* (both in the sense of 'uncertain, risky' and that of 'random') at first reading, not only because this first depiction of a homosexual act would have easily offended Proust's contemporary readers' moral sense of propriety, but also because the subject matter seems rather out of place within the framework of *Du côté de chez Swann*. Facing strong criticism from influential readers such as Paul Souday, Proust had to defend himself by insisting that the passage

était, en effet, 'inutile' pour le premier volume. Mais son ressouvenir est le soutien des tomes IV et V (par la jalousie qu'elle inspire, etc.). En la supprimant, je n'aurais pas changé grand-chose au premier volume ; j'aurais, en revanche, par la solidarité des parties, fait tomber deux volumes entiers, dont elle est la pierre angulaire, sur la tête du lecteur.⁹⁹

The 'deux volumes entiers' most certainly refer to *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and *La Prisonnière* (which we will shortly explore).

⁹⁸ Shen, *Essential Selection*, p. 2. 所选章节或段落全是完整的，没有任何删节

⁹⁹ Souday was condemning 'certaines scènes troubles et inutiles de *Swann* [...] une scène entre deux jeunes filles'. Marcel Proust, 'Lettre à Paul Souday [10 novembre 1919]', in *Correspondance XVIII*, ed. by Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1990), p. 464.

Thus, the Montjouvain scene proves to be particularly crucial for our understanding of Proust's work, not only because of its plot in which the protagonist first witnesses sadism and same-sex acts in a novel that represents 'the first major literary work in France to take on the issue of same-sex sexual relations directly and in an apparently objective manner';¹⁰⁰ but perhaps more importantly for Proust, this scene 'bridges the perceived structural binarism between the serious outer volumes addressing the nature of time and memory and the trivia-infused inner volumes that deal with deviant sexuality'.¹⁰¹ Interesting enough, this structural concern over the interdependence of the 'inner volumes' would seem to justify Zhou's decision to omit the Montjouvain scene in his abridged Chinese edition of *Du côté de chez Swann*, precisely in the attempt to make this volume more independent from the rest of *La Recherche*. Conversely, in Shen's *Essential Selection* based on Proust's tripartite vision of the novel, the Montjouvain scene literally becomes the only passage which features explicit homosexual acts, without therefore achieving what Proust calls 'la solidarité des parties' either. Thus both anthological approaches to Proust's *La Recherche* which aim to popularize Proust's work in China, despite a considerable lapse of time between their respective publications (one in 1992, the other in 2009), have shown little progress as regards to the perception of the 'serious outer' to the 'trivia-infused inner' volumes in their understanding of Proust's theme-bound structure. Whereas the framing volumes' thematic concerns of 'time and memory' find distinct echoes in the Chinese aesthetic and philosophical traditions (as will be examined in other chapters), the inner volumes' exploration of 'deviant sexuality', which forms Proust's 'solidarité des parties' with the Montjouvain passage, has failed to draw any critical attention. What is more, an extensive list of sexual vocabulary has yet to be invented and adapted in modern

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Ladenson, 'Sexuality', in *Proust in Context*, ed. Adam Watt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 115.

¹⁰¹ Ladenson, *Proust's Lesbianism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 62.

vernacular Chinese to accommodate this particular aspect of Proust's work – a process that is evidently affected by the development of sexological discourses in China from the 1980's until today.

As Proust's *La Recherche* pioneered in the explicit treatment of 'deviant sexuality' in literary works, translating the novel in a country which had only recently been (re)exposed to Western influence also propels the translators to investigate systematically the latest development of Chinese sexual discourses. The first book-length study of male homosexuality in mainland China, entitled 'Their World', co-authored by Wang Xiaobo and Li Yinhe, came out in 1992 after three years of research (which coincided exactly with the first Chinese publication dates of *La Recherche*).¹⁰² Li subsequently published one book-length study on sadomasochism and another on the (homo)sexuality of Chinese women in 1998.¹⁰³ In terms of explicitly gay-themed Chinese cultural productions, notable early cinematic works include *East Palace, West Palace* (1996) and *Happy Together* (1997).¹⁰⁴ The

¹⁰² Li later extensively revised the book and changed the title to 'Tongxinglian yawenhua' ('The Subculture of Homosexuality', 同性恋亚文化) in 1998. The edition used here is published by a different publisher in 2009. The co-author, WANG Xiaobo, is Li's partner. We will be examining Wang's creative reception of Proust in Chapter Two. See LI Yinhe, *Tongxinglian yawenhua* (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia University Press, 2009), p. 23. It is worth noting that there had been other important studies of homosexuality in China which significantly predate *Their World*, such as *Zhongguo tongxing'ai mishi* (*The Secret History of Chinese Homosexual Love*, 中国同性恋秘史) (1964) by Wei Xing Shi Guan Zhai Zhu (唯性史观斋主) and *Zhongguo tongxing'ai shilu* (*The History of Chinese Homosexual Love*, 中国同性恋史录) (1984) by Takeshi Koake (小明雄). But they all came out in Hong Kong. It is highly unlikely the first Chinese translators of *La Recherche* had access to those works.

¹⁰³ LI Yinhe, *Zhongguo nüxing de ganqing yu xing* (*Chinese Women's Feelings and Sexuality*, 中国女性的感情与性) (Beijing: Jinri zhongguo chubanshe, 1998); *Nüelien yawenhua* (*The Subculture of Sadomasochism* 虐恋亚文化) (Beijing: Jinri zhongguo chubanshe, 1998).

¹⁰⁴ *East Palace, West Palace* (东宫西宫) is directed by the mainland Chinese director ZHANG Yuan (张元), the script of which is actually co-written by Wang Xiaobo, adapted from Wang's novella 'si shui rou qing' ('Tender Feelings Like Water', 似水柔情). In addition to the theme of male homosexuality, sadomasochism also features prominently both in the novella and the film. *Happy Together* (春光乍泄) is directed by the internationally known Hong Kong director WONG Kar-wai, who was awarded the prize for 'Best Director' at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997.

belated appearance of these sociological and artistic works means that the first translators of *La Recherche* were confronted with considerable epistemic challenges in the mid-1980's when translating Western sexual idioms and concepts. The social practices of homosexuality, such as the formation of homosexual group identity and meeting points as well as the development of a certain codified common language, appeared only in the 1990's. Although homosexuality is not a criminal act in mainland China, in a Chinese Classification of Mental Disorder passed as late as 1994 by the Chinese Psychiatric Association, homosexuality is still considered as a mental disorder.¹⁰⁵ It will have to wait until 2001 for it to be removed from that official list.

In the West, homosexuality as a scientific concept is commonly known to have emerged in the nineteenth century, slightly ahead of Proust's time. In China, although the social phenomenon of same-sex eroticism has been well documented since ancient times, systematic scholarly works on homosexuality did not take off until the late 1980's.¹⁰⁶ As discussed in the Introduction, the entire Chinese intellectual landscape of the 1980's under the banner of 'Culture Fever' is marked by a revived enthusiasm for translating Western texts. As far as sexology is concerned, it is those Western theories popular in the first half of the twentieth century that received primary attention. Many intellectuals working in translation in the 1980's see their project as both a recapitulation and continuation of their predecessors' work from the early twentieth century, which was brutally interrupted under the Communist regime. The more 'revolutionary' Western discourses of sexuality from the

¹⁰⁵ Chou, *Tongzhi*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ I must clarify that Western discourses of sexuality were briefly introduced in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, their development – appropriation and reconceptualization—came to a premature end with the establishment of the PRC in 1949, as the Communist regime consistently imposed sexual puritanism and an overt display of sexuality would have been seen as Western contamination and corruption.

1960's and 1970's, perhaps most importantly those advocated by Foucault, were not properly introduced in China until the 1990's.

As Bret Hinsch observes, 'in importing Western sexual morality, however, the Chinese also imported Western intolerance of homosexuality' in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ The same logic is valid for the import of Western scientific and medical discourses on homosexuality. These discourses actually prove to be even more efficacious as the Chinese mentality generally finds the medical model more acceptable than the Western religious model. Just like the dominant sexual discourse in Proust's time, the Chinese discourse on homosexuality and other 'deviant sexualities' such as sadomasochism in the 1980's and, in fact, well into the 1990's, went through a significant phase of medicalization and pathologization. The renowned Chinese sexologist ZHANG Beichuan remarks in his book published in 1994, *Tongxing'ai* (literally 'same-sex love'): 'almost all mainland scholars stressed that *tongxing'ai* is a psychological illness . . . an abnormal behavior that should be disciplined and penalized'.¹⁰⁸ It is thus very interesting to notice a certain epistemic as well as lexical parallel between the dominant theory of (homo)sexuality around Proust's time and the common (mis)conception of Chinese sexology almost a century later. More often than not, the early Chinese translations of *La Recherche* demonstrate a palpable radicalization of the pathologizing tendency in Proust's own sexual discourse.

As we know, the vocabulary of sexuality was in great flux during Proust's time. For example, sadism and masochism, as medical terms and concepts, had only recently been proposed by the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1890 and sadomasochism was understood as essentially a manifest form of 'sexual perversion'. Although Proust

¹⁰⁷ Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.167.

¹⁰⁸ ZHANG Beichuan, *Tongxingai* (Shandong: Shandong Science and Technology Press, 1994), p. 17. Cited in Chou, *Tongzhi*, p. 111. Chou additionally includes a list of pathological and negative views representative of major Chinese sexologists, pp. 111-2.

might have been aware of Krafft-Ebing's influential theory, in the Montjouvain passage, the word 'sadisme' or 'sadique' is employed hardly in its medical sense. It is rather unlikely that any psychiatrist, whether during Proust's time or today, would diagnose the act of spitting on a photograph as 'mental illness'. Instead, Proust repeatedly highlights the theatricalized expression of human intimacy, as the protagonist comments

[...] qu'on aurait eu de la peine à rencontrer réalisée à ce degré de perfection ailleurs que chez une sadique ; c'est à la lumière de la rampe des *théâtres du boulevard* plutôt que sous la lampe d'une maison de campagne véritable qu'on peut voir une fille faire cracher une amie sur le portrait d'un père qui n'a vécu que pour elle; et il n'y a guère que le sadisme qui donne *un fondement dans la vie à l'esthétique du mélodrame*.¹⁰⁹

And the protagonist subsequently concludes, 'une sadique comme elle [Mlle Vinteuil] est l'artiste du mal'.¹¹⁰ Although the frequent appearance of words such as 'mal' and 'vice' may suggest a pathological overtone especially when associated with homosexual behaviour, Proust in these passages also emphatically present homosexuality as, to borrow Lucille Cairns' phrase, an 'aesthetically fecund condition'.¹¹¹

I.9.1. Translating Sadomasochism

In early translations, i.e. the *First Translation* and the *Essential Selection*, it is the Chinese word *shi-nüe-kuang* (施虐狂) that is being consistently used. It can refer to both the concept of sadism, as in Proust's phrase, 'l'idée que je me suis faite du sadisme', and the person who practices sadism. *Shi-nüe-kuang*, literally meaning 'abuse craze', sounds far too

¹⁰⁹ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 161. My italics.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 162.

¹¹¹ Lucille Cairns, 'Homosexuality and Lesbianism in Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe*', *French Studies* 51.1 (1997), 43-57 (p. 56).

colloquial, judgemental, and emotional to be an accurate conceptual term for sadism or sadist, and has almost been abandoned in formal writings today. In our context, ‘abuse craze’ would also sound slightly too strong to most Chinese readers to describe an act of spitting. However, more importantly, both the *First Translation* and the *Essential Selection* explicitly refer to sadism as a ‘mental illness’ and sadist as a ‘patient’ or ‘sufferer’,¹¹² which is, of course, not exactly what the source text says. Spitting on one’s father’s portrait may be severely condemnable for the fundamental Confucius teaching of filial piety which is deeply rooted in traditional as well as contemporary Chinese thought, but it is highly unlikely that an ordinary Chinese reader – or indeed any reader – would automatically connect this particular act to mental illness. The translators’ decision to pathologize the concept of sadism is most likely to have been affected by contemporaneous popular medical opinions in China. Therefore, there seems to be a re-application of dominant medical discourse on sexuality from Proust’s era, to the translation of Proust’s work in the Chinese context.

In the sadomasochistic passage from the end of the novel, often considered structurally ‘mirroring’ the Montjouvain passage, where the narrator witnesses Charlus being chained and whipped in a hotel room, the word ‘sadique’ appears again and it is translated (by different translators) as *xing-nüe-dai-kuang-(zhe)* 性虐待狂(者), literally ‘(the person of) sexual abuse craze’. Although my English translation of the term seems to have only added the adjective ‘sexual’ to the previous term used in the Montjouvain passage, their corresponding Chinese characters are actually quite different in terms of specificity. Whereas the previous term *shi-nüe-kuang* (abuse craze) clearly indicates the active role of the doer and may not be specifically related to sex, *xing-nüe-dai-kuang* (sexual abuse craze)

¹¹² The original expression from the *First Translation* is 施虐狂患者 (‘the patient of “abuse craze”’, p. 120), and the one from the *Essential Selection* 施虐狂的病例 (‘the medical case of “abuse craze”’, p. 79).

is explicitly sexual but rather vague about the roles of the abuser and the abused. This variation may serve as a tiny proof of inconsistent translations of terminology due to different translators. But more significantly, it shows that there is a lack of a coherent ‘theory’ of sadism in Chinese. Whereas an English or German translator is able to systematically translate ‘sadique’ as ‘sadist’ or ‘Sadist(in)’ due to their common etymology, a Chinese translator finds no equivalent of the term and has to translate it according to the context. The word ‘sadism’ and the word ‘masochism’, which respectively derive from two literary figures (i.e. Sade and Sacher-Masoch), are not translated etymologically or phonetically. The closest Chinese ‘conceptual equivalents’ are *shi-nüe(-zhe)* (施虐[者], sexual abuse[r]) and *shou-nüe(-zhe)* (受虐[者], the sexually abused).¹¹³ Unlike in the West where sadism and masochism could be seen first as *literary* phenomena which are then developed as medical and pathological discourses through Krafft-Ebing, and perhaps even more influentially, through Freud, their Chinese translation recognizes only the latter development. Charlus in this passage is called ‘un sadique’¹¹⁴ but is actually the abused (i.e. more of a masochist), which seems to contradict our current usual understanding of the term, hence the vague Chinese variation, i.e. *xing-nüe-dai-kuang* instead of *shi-nüe-kuang* (which unequivocally refers to the doer).

At any rate, translators of the two new translations of *La Recherche*, Xu and Zhou, have both tried to modify the Chinese rendition of ‘sadism’. Xu only slightly changes the last character *kuang* (狂) to *yin* (淫), so *shi-nüe-kuang* (‘abuse craze’) becomes *shi-nüe-yin* (literally ‘abuse excess’). This term is slightly more literary as the character *yin* carries multiple meanings: 1) excessive; 2) wanton; and 3) illicit sexual relations. This choice of word seems to be able to capture at once different aspects of Mlle Vinteuil’s relationship

¹¹³ On a different but not entirely irrelevant note, Sade’s and Sacher-Masoch’s works still remain largely untranslated in Chinese today.

¹¹⁴ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 403.

with her girlfriend, and indeed, most other lesbian relationships portrayed in the novel.

However, the strong moral condemnation is evident.

Zhou's terminological proposal also comes out of careful research, *nüe-lian-pi* (虐恋癖). *Nüe-lian*, literally 'abusive love', is currently one of the most commonly accepted Chinese term for 'somasochism'. The word is accorded privilege due to its relatively positive connotation, i.e. 'love' is less judgmental than 'craze' or 'excess/wantonness/illicitness'. More importantly, as Li Yinhe points out: 'the word has a specific implication: this [somasochistic] tendency is relevant to human love behaviour, much more than to abuse or to be abused'.¹¹⁵ Although the term was coined by the distinguished Chinese sociologist and eugenicist, PAN Guangdan (潘光旦), in the first half of the twentieth century, it was not popularized until the 1990's.¹¹⁶ The word *pi* (癖), despite the character component '疒' which implies 'illness', is predominantly used to mean 'addiction', 'hobby', or 'natural inclination'.¹¹⁷ It is a near equivalent of the suffix '-philia'. Therefore, Zhou's proposal, *nüe-lian-pi*, can be more precisely understood as 'the proclivity for abusive love'. Nevertheless, the problem with this translation is that the term covers both sadism and masochism, which may appear slightly overcompensatory since Proust is specifically referring to the former in the Montjouvain passage.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ LI Yinhe, *Nüelian yawenhua*, p. 1. 表达一层特殊含义：这种倾向与人类的恋爱行为有关，而不仅仅是施虐和受虐活动。

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ The medical sense of the word or character does not completely die out in traditional Chinese medicine. In classical Chinese, 癖 is frequently interchangeable with its homonym 痞 which refers to a kind of 'lump in the abdomen' in Chinese medicine.

¹¹⁸ I am well aware of this theory of considering sadism to be masochism turned toward the self. Such is the view offered by Saylor in *Somasochistic Homotext* (p. 4). But it is often seen as an oversimplification of the manifest and conceptual differences between the two phenomena. See Gilles Deleuze's ground-breaking essay, 'Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty', in *Venus in Furs*, trad. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989), pp. 9-142.

Crucially, both Xu's and Zhou's translations remove the explicitly pathological and clinical reference of sadism which features in earlier translations.

Proust's conceptualization of homosexuality, as has been widely acknowledged, reflects the dominant theory of homosexuality of his time—the *Zwischenstufen* or man-woman theory formulated by the German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrich in *Memnon* (1868)—and is, in Cairns's words, 'flawed by the limitations of this theory'.¹¹⁹ This theory is 'predicated not on the idea of same-sex attraction per se but rather on the *anima muliebris in corpore virili inclusa* (the soul of a woman trapped in the body of a man)',¹²⁰ which explains Proust's preference of the designation 'invert' or 'inversion' to 'homosexual' or 'homosexuality'—homosexuality in Proust, as states Leo Bersani, is 'nothing but disguised or mistaken heterosexuality'.¹²¹ Proust himself clarifies the conceptual differences between 'inversion' and 'homosexuality':

D'ailleurs il y a une nuance. Les homosexuels mettent leur point d'honneur à n'être pas des invertis. D'après la théorie, toute fragmentaire du reste que j'ébauche ici, il *n'y aurait pas en réalité d'homosexuels*. Si masculine que puisse être l'apparence de la tante, son goût de virilité proviendrait *d'une féminité foncière, fût-elle dissimulée*. Un homosexuel ça serait ce que prétend être, ce que de bonne foi s' imagine être, un inverti.¹²²

Interestingly, Proust also seems to consider the word 'homosexual' to be too German and pedantic, linking it to the notorious Eulenburg affair.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Cairns, 'Homosexuality and Lesbianism', p. 43. See also J. E. Rivers, 'The Myth and Science of Homosexuality in *A la recherche du temps perdu*' in *Homosexualities and French Literature*, ed. by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 262-78.

¹²⁰ Ladenson, 'Sexuality', p. 118.

¹²¹ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 134.

¹²² Cited in Emily Eells-Ogée, 'Introduction', in *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), pp. 11-51 (p. 18). My italics.

¹²³ Philippe, Prince of Eulenburg-Hertefeld, was accused of homosexual conduct which would potentially involve the emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II himself. This scandal is often seen to have provoked the first major public discussion of homosexuality in Germany. For its

‘Mais le lecteur français veut être respecté’ et n’étant pas Balzac je suis obligé de me contenter d’inverti. Homosexuel est trop germanique et pédant, n’ayant guère paru en France [...] et traduit sans doute des journaux berlinois, qu’après le procès Eulenburg.¹²⁴

Proust in this note to himself from one of the manuscript drafts does not seem aware of the fact that the theory of inversion he decidedly opts for is also of ‘German origin’, which probably indicates the popularity and deep rootedness of this theory in France during his era.

By contrast, this conceptual nuance between invert and homosexual is not at all reflected in the Chinese translations. In fact, translators have struggled to find terminological variants in modern vernacular Chinese to accommodate Proust's wide range of vocabulary regarding 'homosexual(ity)': in addition to 'invert' and 'homosexual', there are 'man-woman', 'sodomite', 'tante', to name but a few, which will be explored in the following discussion.

I.9.2. Translating Homosexuality

Earlier translations expose a distinct lack of Chinese terminological variety for homosexual(ity). In the vast majority of cases, *tongxinglian*, literally 'same-sex love', designating both the concept and the person, is consistently applied throughout the novel, regardless of the local terminological variations in the source text. It is the standard and arguably the least ambiguous Chinese translation of 'homosexual(ity)'. 'Inversion' as an abstract term is rendered as *xingyü daocuo* (性欲倒错 or 性欲倒置, literally 'sexual desire

various connections to Proust's novel, see Marion Schmid, 'Eulenburg (Philippe, prince de) [1847-1921]', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, ed. by Annick Bouillaguet (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), pp. 363-64.

¹²⁴ Emily Eells-Ogée, 'Introduction', p. 18.

reversal'), and, cutting out 'sexual desire' in the Chinese expression, it is also understood as a Proustian aesthetic concept.¹²⁵ However, 'invert' as the person, is systematically translated as *tongxinglian* ('same-sex love [person]') rather than *xingyü daocuo zhe* (性欲倒错者, 'sexually inverted person'). The latter sounds slightly stilted and even puzzling in Chinese and translators apparently do not feel the need to adopt such a terminological variant which happens to be *the* term endorsed by Proust. In Part I of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Proust employs the word 'homosexual(ity)' 4 times, whereas 'invert' appears at least 16 times which is translated, without exception, as *tongxinglian* instead of *xingyü daocuo zhe*. In one case, the Chinese word also covers 'sodomie' as in the phrase, 'incriminer la sodomie'.¹²⁶

On very rare occasions, we discover traces of Chinese appropriation of Proust's homosexual vocabulary. For instance, Proust's 'homme-femme' is rendered as *yin-yang-ren* (阴阳人, 'yin-yang person'),¹²⁷ a term which evidently derives from traditional Chinese cosmology, notably found in Daoism. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that *yin-yang*, which refers to two primordial, mutually complementing, and generative forces, is by no means a discourse specifically *on/of* sexuality, although it is often reductively and abusively applied to gender and sexuality studies in modern and contemporary China and becomes at times indistinguishable from Western biological, medical, and sociological discourses. The concept of *yin-yang*, which can be traced back to one of the oldest classic Chinese texts, *Yijing* or the *Book of Changes* (around the first millennium BCE), encompasses a much wider

¹²⁵ See Tu Weiqun, '(Xingyü) daocuo de wenxue jiazhi' ('The Literary Values of (Sexual) Inversion') in *Pulusite pingzhuàn* (Proust: A Critical Biography) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Wenyi Chubanshe, 1999), pp. 114-15. This is one of the very rare references to Proustian sexuality coming out of the Chinese scholarly community in the 1990's.

¹²⁶ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 33. The phrase is translated as 谴责同性恋 in *First Translation II*, p. 1142.

¹²⁷ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 23; *First Translation II*, p. 1136.

cosmological vision than merely sexual acts.¹²⁸ Translators had, of course, never attempted to reconceptualize *yin-yang ren* in order to translate Proust and the word appears only once in Part I of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Another related example is the Chinese translation of 'viril' as '*yang-gang*' (阳刚) – 'yang' as in 'yin-yang' and 'gang' meaning 'hard' as opposed to 'soft'.¹²⁹

It is perhaps worth pointing out that there is, indeed, a long list of classical Chinese words and expressions that describe the phenomenon of same-sex eroticism. But they are mostly metaphors or contain explicit references to specific classical tales and anecdotes and have almost never been formulated in a conceptual or analytical language, which would have been required to accommodate Proust's text.¹³⁰

Compared to the early translations, the new translations of *La Recherche* will demonstrate precisely an epistemic effort for a more varied expression of homosexuality in Chinese. At this stage, it is technically impossible to gain a global view of the evolving discourse on homosexuality across translations because both new translations are still work in progress. The following observations are based on the comparison and contrast between the old and new translations of *La Prisonnière*. Zhou is one of the three collaborators who

¹²⁸ For this reason, Chou goes so far as to rather sweepingly state: 'before the twentieth century, there were no corresponding Chinese words for sex or sexuality'. But the distinction he makes between the ancient Chinese words for 'erotic sentiments' (*se, yu, qing*, 色, 欲, 情) as well as words for 'intercourse' (*jiao he*, 交合 *zhougongli*, 周公礼) and the 'Western notion of sexual intercourse, which postulates two individuals abstracted from social relations', would need further clarifications. However, he does usefully point out that the current Chinese word for sex, *xing* (as in *tong-xing-lian*), is a recent translation, as he explains: '*xing*, is an important Chinese word meaning nature, thus revealing the Chinese naturalistic paradigm of sex'. See Chou, *Tongzhi*, pp. 13-15.

¹²⁹ Interestingly, the antonym of *yang-gang*, *yin-rou* ('rou' meaning 'soft'), is one of Wei's perceptions of Proust's work as a whole. See Part I Chapter II.

¹³⁰ For example, *fen/yu tao* 分/余桃 ('split peach'), *duan xiu* 断袖 ('cut sleeve'), *long yang* 龙阳 (proper name of a ruler), *qi xiongdi* 契兄弟 ('contract brothers') for (different kinds of) male homosexuals; words for female homosexuals are fewer, but far from non-existent, *jin lan* 金兰 and *zishu nü* 自梳女 ('self-combing girl') are two examples. For a fascinating account of these terms and their contexts, see Chou, *Tongzhi*, pp. 26-42; also Li Yinhe, *Subculture of Homosexuality*, pp. 9-20.

translated *La Prisonnière* for the *First Translation*, and he then translated the same volume independently. We are thus able to gain a very concrete and specific perspective on the evolving Chinese homosexual discourse by examining how the translator's intellectual development over a decade has shaped his perception of a similar text.¹³¹

Two most striking examples are found in the passage where guests at the Verdurins' are openly discussing homosexuality. First, the Latin chant which Brichot recites to please Charlus contains the line, '*Sumus enim Sodomitae*' ('Car nous sommes des Sodomites'). In the *First Translation*, the word '*Sodomitae*' is directly translated as 'jijian' (鸡奸), a rather pejorative term for a homosexual act. It literally means 'chicken lewdness', referring to 'the belief that domesticated fowls commonly engage in same-sex acts'.¹³² Although most dictionaries consider 'jijian' to be the standard translation of 'sodomy', the image of lewd chicken seems quite incompatible with the biblical reference to Sodom. There is no Chinese word that can express the biblical city of sin *and* the homosexual act at the same time. Proper nouns such as 'Sodom' and 'Gomorrhah' can be rendered phonetically as 'suo-duo-mu' (索多姆) and 'ge-mo-er' (戈摩尔),¹³³ but these nouns have not developed any sexual sense in Chinese. A person of 'suo-duo-mu' is literally understood as an inhabitant of this biblical place, without any sexual overtone. One simply cannot use 'inhabitant of Sodom' to mean 'homosexual' in Chinese. When translating the word 'Sodomite', the Chinese translator has to choose either a *literal* rendition of the term, which is biblical but not 'homosexual', or an *explicit* rendition of the term, which is 'homosexual' but not biblical. The context of the chant clearly refers to the burning of Sodom, '*Sumus enim Sodomitae* /

¹³¹ As aforementioned, whereas Zhou's new translation is based on the new Pléiade edition published between 1987 and 1989, the *First Translation* is based on the old Pléiade published in 1954.

¹³² Chou, *Tongzhi*, p. 23.

¹³³ These are translations provided by the *First Translation*. The two terms are translated differently in the two new translations as 'suo-duo-ma' (所多玛) and 'e-mo-la' (蛾摩拉).

igne tantum perituri ('Car nous sommes des Sodomites / Et ne devons périr que par le feu'). Perhaps translating 'Sodomitae' as 'sinner' or 'sinner of Sodom' would work better.¹³⁴ In the new translation, Zhou replaces 'jijian' with a contemporary Chinese slang word 'jilao' (基佬), a term which has gained huge popularity in recent years. The second 'ji' corresponds to a different Chinese character and bears no relation to 'chicken'. Interestingly, due to the relative novelty of the Chinese term, the translator feels obliged to explain what *jilao* means in the footnotes: '[contemporary Chinese] slang for male homosexual, which comes from the pronunciation of the English word "gay", See Li Yinhe's *The Subculture of Homosexuality*'.¹³⁵ Additionally, 'lao' is a slightly pejorative word for 'man', so *jilao* is really the equivalent of 'gay man'. It is fascinating that the translator explicitly applies contemporary new knowledge of gender and sexuality to the translation of *La Recherche*, ascribing – perhaps unintentionally – a new 'gay' identity to the text in its Chinese context. However, translating 'Sodomitae' as 'gay man' still does not settle the issue of the biblical reference. This fundamental cultural and theological dissociation of homosexuality from resonances of 'sin' and 'divine punishment' that it holds in the biblical tradition will always cause problems when we translate Proust's homosexual discourse into Chinese.¹³⁶

The second example, which is found a couple of pages later, confirms once again Proust's view of 'homosexuality' (as distinguished from 'inversion') as a German conception, as Charlus remarks, 'mais j'avoue que ce qui a encore le plus changé, c'est ce que les

¹³⁴ This verse in the *First Translation* is rather forcedly translated as 就为我们是鸡奸, / 要毁只有被火毁.

¹³⁵ Zhou, *La Prisonnière*, p. 314. 男同性恋者俗称, 由英语 gay 的发音引申而来。参见李银河的《同性恋亚文化》。

¹³⁶ There is, after all, a sizeable Christian community in China, which has a great diversity. They do not, however, share a common discourse on homosexuality, and the subject of homosexuality has rarely topped the priority list of their theological teaching. In fact, rather like the way Proust's work has been received, most Chinese Christian teachings focus on those biblical themes which strongly resonate with traditional Chinese thought such as the 'filial piety' in Confucianism. Christian discourses have seldom been explicitly used to condemn homosexuality in China.

Allemands appellent l'homosexualité'.¹³⁷ Rather surprisingly, Zhou renders 'homosexualité' as 德国病 ('German disease') in italics and provides the following footnote:

二十世纪初，德国同性恋人数众多，一说柏林当时有二万名男妓。因此法国人称同性恋为“德国病”。此处原文，直译应为“德国人所说的同性恋”。但因原文中前后多处，各以不同的词来指同性恋，为避免行文过于费解，译文稍作了变通。¹³⁸

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany had a great number of homosexuals [*tongxinglian*]; one source states there were twenty thousand male prostitutes in Berlin. Therefore, the French called homosexuality the 'German disease'. The original text here should be more literally translated as 'what the Germans call homosexuality'. But because different words for homosexual are used before and after the passage, in order to avoid making the text too difficult to understand, the translated text has made some changes.

What the translator forgets to mention is that this piece of information is also adapted from his reading of Li Yinhe's work.¹³⁹ Zhou clearly feels uncomfortable about repetitively using the same word 'tongxinglian' for Proust's 'different words for homosexual' and makes a scholarly attempt to adopt a new term with justification from a different source text, which reinforces – but also medicalizes – Proust's view of 'homosexuality' (as opposed to 'sexual inversion') as a German phenomenon.

Other minor changes include Zhou's treatment of the expression, 'la Femme d'une Tante', prior the above passage. 'Tante' is, as was mentioned previously, another term for homosexual which Proust would have favoured had it not been explored by Balzac before him. Whereas the *First Translation* resolutely footnotes 'tante' as 'jijian zhe' (鸡奸者),¹⁴⁰

Zhou in his new translation decides to remove the footnote and leave 'la Femme d'une

¹³⁷ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 810.

¹³⁸ Zhou, *La Prisonnière*, p. 317.

¹³⁹ See Li, *Subculture of Homosexuality*, p. 15.

¹⁴⁰ As explained before, *jijian* is the most widely accepted translation of 'sodomy', but only in the sense of 'anal sex' or other 'same-sex act'. This translation does not reflect any biblical connection and its etymology refers to domestic fowls' same-sex acts.

Tante' (*yima de qizi*, 姨妈的妻子) unexplained.¹⁴¹ In many ways, the homosexual connotation should be clear from the context and the translator does not have to repeat another *tongxinglian*.

Zhou's reading of Li Yinhe's work on homosexuality is worthy of further attention as it plays a crucial role in the evolution of the Chinese homosexual discourse reflected across Zhou's translations. Li is known to be sympathetic to issues of gay rights and gender equality. In *Subculture of Homosexuality*, Li notably dedicates her last chapter on the right and appropriate ways in which one should treat the phenomenon of homosexuality in China. In fact, after homosexuality was removed from the official list of mental illnesses in China in 2001, Li has been proposing the same-sex marriage act to the National People's Congress almost annually since 2003. Li's influence may well be one of the main reasons why Zhou has shown a palpable attempt to tone down a number of negative references to homosexuality in Proust's text, and to a certain extent, to *depathologize* its perception. The word, 'vice', is most frequently associated with homosexual acts in *La Recherche*. In early translations, 'vice' is consistently translated as 'exi' ('evil habit', 恶习) or 'chou'e' ('ugly evil', 丑恶)¹⁴² whether in the Montjouvain scene or the passage of 'la Femme d'une Tante', which clearly expresses a firm moral condemnation. Notwithstanding this perception of homosexuality as something inherently evil as the *First Translation* implies, Zhou consistently changes all the 'vices' of homosexuality into 'pi-xi' (癖习). *Pi*, as explained earlier, means 'addiction', 'hobby', or 'natural inclination'; and *xi* 'habit'. In many ways, this is not necessarily a deliberate softening of tone purely based on Zhou's 'learned sympathy' towards homosexuality, i.e. the cultural change brought about by for instance Li's works,

¹⁴¹ It should be pointed out that this phrase is mistranslated as *yi ma* (姨妈) ('tante' instead of 'femme d'une tante') in the *First Translation*, which has been corrected by Zhou in the new translation.

¹⁴² *First Translation I*, p. 121; *First Translation II*, p. 1720; *Essential Selection*, p. 80.

Proust's narrator himself states on several occasions that the word 'vice' is only used for the sake of convenience, 'le vice (on parle ainsi pour la commodité du langage)'; and Proust himself questions the validity of this conventional designation of homosexual acts, 'leur vice, ou ce que l'on nomme improprement ainsi'.¹⁴³

This manifest evolution of the Chinese sexual discourse from the early to new translations of *La Recherche* reflects not only an enhanced understanding of Proust's work, but more significantly, it signals an *epistemic* shift in the way contemporary Chinese society perceives gender and sexuality from the 1980's to now. For one thing, as we have seen in previous discussions of 'prefaces', attention to the theme of homosexuality and to Proust's sexual vocabulary is vehemently encouraged by authoritative Western Proust scholars such as Jean Milly. For another, translations and introductions of Western sexological texts,¹⁴⁴ which largely overdetermine the development of modern and contemporary Chinese sexual discourses, evidently find their literary reincarnations in the translations of Proust's text.

To better conceptualize discourses of sadomasochism and homosexuality in certain French texts, Saylor in his study strongly advocates the term, 'sadomasochistic homotextuality'. The concept of 'homotextuality', more precisely, suggests 'the way in which homosexuality is interwoven in a text'. And 'it is not', Saylor continues, 'the transference of an actual sociological phenomenon into the literary plane. Rather, it is the creation of a discourse, as all written discussions of sexuality invent, rather than mimic actual realities'.¹⁴⁵ The Latin suffix 'textus' further points out the problematics of language

¹⁴³ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 15; p. 19.

¹⁴⁴ Freud's *The Psychology of Love* (translated in 1988) and Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* (translated in 1989), to name but two important works which were translated around the same time as the translation of *La Recherche*.

¹⁴⁵ Saylor, *Sadomasochistic Homotext*, pp. 2-3.

in literary representations of 'deviant sexuality'. In his chapter on Proust, Saylor convincingly argues:

Homosexuality itself is unnameable, natural yet secretive, and has a peculiar relationship with language. The 'vice' of homosexuals is not their sexuality, but the perversion of language. [...] the only real perversion is linguistic. [...] Special languages, lies and distinct signs: these are the elements of homotextuality within the text. It is not the actions of the characters which are important, rather, it is the rerendering of words.¹⁴⁶

The communication among homosexuals in *La Recherche*, as the protagonist-narrator observes, operates according to the 'lois d'un art secret',¹⁴⁷ in order for them to live within a heteronormative society.

This secretive language of homosexuals subtly or 'perversely' represented in Proust's text poses a particular challenge for the Chinese translators of *La Recherche*. They have increasingly demonstrated a conscious attempt to decipher and illuminate such secrecy of Proust's sexual discourses in their respective translations. Due to a lack of conceptual and linguistic equivalents to accommodate Proust's sexual discourses, the Chinese translators are obliged to appropriate and invent certain vocabularies and discourses of sexuality which nevertheless reflect the sexological texts – rather than the social practices of homosexuality and sadomasochism – in contemporary China. In a way, this process of creative translation is not fundamentally different from Proust's own linguistic appropriation and conceptual refashioning of the dominant sexological theories of his time. Therefore, the phenomenon of 'sadomasochistic homotext' doggedly persists in the Chinese translations of Proust's text, from terminological monotony and conceptual pathologization to terminological confusions and finally to increasing reliance on sociological works and their appropriations.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 101.

¹⁴⁷ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 6.

Chapter II

Proust and Mainland Chinese Writers: *La Recherche* and Its Postmodern Hypertexts

II.1. Introduction

In Chapter I, I have examined certain discursive and epistemic shifts reflected in the old and new translations of *La Recherche*, but the impact of the ongoing new translations of *La Recherche* on the younger generations of writers and their reception of Proust's work will have to wait for at least another decade to be properly assessed. Different from our emphasis on the variety of the Chinese translations and editions of *La Recherche* in the last chapter, this chapter focuses on three mainland Chinese writers' creative reception and intertextual engagement with one particular translation of *La Recherche*, i.e. the *First Translation*, in their respective novellas and short stories.

The three chosen writers of our corpus, WANG Xiaobo (1952-1997), YU Hua (1960-), and WEI Hui (1973-), represent three successive generations and different literary schools of contemporary Chinese writers. Whilst sharing a number of common intertextual and appropriative strategies, their respective engagements with Proust are greatly influenced by, and at the same time, interacting with, the *First Translation*. This corpus has been largely informed by the existing scholarship on the subject. For example, HUANG Hong and Yinde ZHANG have respectively – but rather briefly – studied the intertextual references to

Proust in those present writers' works.¹ However, both of them try to offer a general overview and tend to treat those references as 'empirical findings' without necessarily investigating textual details and their particular contexts. Huang does not propose any approach to conceptualize the intertextual phenomenon, let alone any of its cross-cultural implications. On the other hand, grounded in the context of the entire Chinese literary landscape of the twentieth century, Zhang's monumental work has a much broader scope than mine. Proust and contemporary Chinese intellectual history are dealt with almost separately.

Much like the previous discussion of translation, the present approach firmly embeds the creative reception of Proust's work in China's troubled history of the twentieth century, examining how these literary activities *refract* not only the internal ideological tensions and transformations of modern and especially post-Mao China, but also the exponential cultural exchange between China and France and the West at large. Against the backdrop of China's explosive development from modernity to postmodernity at the beginning of the 1990's, the 'profound social anomalies and ideological contradictions',² outlined at the beginning of the last chapter will explain and characterize some of my observations on the three contemporary mainland Chinese writers' equivocal intertextual engagement with Proust. As Lu continues, 'Chinese *postmodernism* is the most forceful expression of these anomalies and contradictions in the realm of art and culture'.³ These writers were, on the one hand, consciously experimenting with Modernist (not just Proust's) styles and techniques, and often prided themselves on being 'avant-gardist'. On the other hand, the ways they took on Proust cannot be innocent of 'kitschifying' Proust, i.e. reducing

¹ Huang, 'Proust retrouvé', pp. 294-304. See also Zhang, *Monde*, pp. 109-132.

² Sheldon Lu, *China*, p. 66.

³ *Ibid.*

Proust's canonical work to an easily 'consumable' level,⁴ and of rather superficially citing Proust in order to enhance the cultural prestige of their own works.

The following novellas and short stories that I will examine were all written and published in the 1990's.⁵ On the surface, their respective use of Proust appears to be eclectic and does not bespeak any ostensible common ground. But this is precisely one of the reasons why these writers were chosen in the first place, they are meant to reflect a representative variety of literary and cultural appropriations of Proust in contemporary Chinese fiction. What will gradually unfold in the course of our following study is that these Chinese writers' diverse approaches to Proust often illuminate different aspects of the same socio-historical context of a drastically changing China from the 1980's to the 1990's. In this respect, Franco Moretti's theoretical observation seems particularly relevant to our demonstrative purpose:

Knowledge of the socio-historical context of a literary work or genre is not therefore an 'extra' to be kept in the margins of rhetorical analysis. In general, whether one is aware of it or not, such knowledge furnishes the starting point for interpretation itself, providing it with those initial hypotheses without which rhetorical mechanisms would be hard to understand, or would tell us very little indeed.⁶

⁴ The expression, 'kitschification of Proust', is from Margaret Gray. She further explains: 'yet a more anxious energy may be at work here than kitschification suggests, and notions of the part-object or fetish help investigate the unease behind these various reductions of Proust, as in the tendency to conceive the madeleine scene synecdochically for all the *Recherche*. The anxious cultural ambivalence through which we now read Proust cannot but inform and reshape his text'. See Gray, *Postmodern Proust*, p. 12.

⁵ Most of these works have not been translated into English or French. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine. Yu Hua's *Cries in the Drizzle/Cris dans la bruine* (*Zai xiyu zhong huhan*), which has been translated into both English and French among many other languages, is an important exception. As we will see, as a result of the translations, this novella will mark out Yu's international achievement, receiving French institutional recognitions.

⁶ Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), p. 8.

II.2. Wang Xiaobo's 'Fleeting Years as Water' ('*Si shui liu nian*', 似水流年) (1992)⁷

Wang is a scholar, essayist, and creative writer. He is actively involved in Chinese social and ethical debates on miscellaneous topics such as homosexuality, feminism, Chinese cinema, and the environment, to name but a few. His collection of essays entitled *My Spiritual Home* (*Wo de jingshen jiayuan*, 我的精神家园) would be representative of the range of cultural and sociological topics his writings engage with. He is famous for his inclination to play intellectual games in his creative works.

Although it is not immediately relevant to the present novella, it is worth pointing out that Wang is the husband of the leading Chinese sociologist on gender and sexuality Li Yinhe, whose influence on the development of the Chinese sexological discourse has been noted in the last chapter. Together, the couple co-authored the first book-length study of predominantly male homosexuality in contemporary mainland China, entitled 'Their World', which came out in 1992 after three years of research (coinciding exactly with the first Chinese publication dates of *La Recherche*).⁸ Wang's ethical engagement with the topic of homosexuality can be found in his essays such as 'About the Issue of Homosexuality' ('Guanyu tongxinglian de wenti', 关于同性恋的问题, 1994) and 'About the Ethical Issue of Homosexuality' ('Youguan tongxinglian de lunli wenti', 有关同性恋的伦理问题, 1993).⁹ Furthermore, his other novella, '*si shui rou qing*' ('Tender Feelings Like Water', 似水柔情), later adapted into the film *East Palace, West Palace*, from which the English title for the

⁷ Wang Xiabo, '*Si shui liu nian*', in *Huangjin shidai* (Golden Age, 黄金时代) (Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2011), pp. 129-198.

⁸ As clarified in the last chapter, there had been earlier studies on this topic in Hong Kong. See Section I.9.

⁹ Both essays are recollected in Wang, *Wo de jingshen jiayuan* (*My Spiritual Home*, 我的精神家园) (Beijing: Wenhua wenyi chubanshe, 1997), pp. 224-228; pp. 229-235.

original novella is derived, explicitly deals with homosexuality and sadomasochism.¹⁰ This title strongly echoes '*Si shui liu nian*' ('Fleeting Years as Water') because of the shared 'water' analogy, although the two stories are unrelated, and the former does not contain any references to Proust either. Meanwhile, as we will see, although Proust features in 'Fleeting Years as Water', Wang does not at all engage with the theme of homosexuality or sadomasochism in Proust's work. From the critical angle of the present thesis, this fact could to some extent reflect our observation in Chapter I that certain important aspects of *La Recherche* such as homosexuality were simply absent in the Chinese reception of Proust's work in the early 1990's, even for those readers and writers who are generally interested in the topic(s) and courageous enough to tackle taboo subjects.

The storyline of 'Fleeting Years as Water' has almost nothing to do with *La Recherche*. It follows a narrator who, through a consistently sarcastic tone, self-referentially recounts the somewhat absurd and grotesque stories and anecdotes of those people of his generation who lived through the hardship of the Cultural Revolution. Yet, allusions and references to *La Recherche* suddenly become omnipresent once the narrator has revealed to the reader why he adopts the title 'Fleeting Year as Water' for this novella in the following 'pivotal' passage which features Proust:

在似水流年里，有件事叫我日夜不安。在此之前首先要解释一下什么叫似水流年。普鲁斯特写了一本书，谈到自己身上发生过的事。这些事看起来就如一个人中了邪躺在河底，眼看潺潺流水，粼粼流光，落叶，浮木，空玻璃瓶，一样一样从身上流过去。这个书名怎么译，翻译家大费周章。最近的译法是追忆似水年华。听上去普鲁斯特写书时已经死了多时，又诈了尸。而且这也不好念。

照我看普鲁斯特的书，译作似水流年就对了。[...]

似水流年是一个人所有的一切，只有这个东西，才真正归你所有。其余的一切，都是片刻的欢愉和不幸，转眼间就跑到那似水流年

¹⁰ See WANG Xiaobo, 'East Palace, West Palace', in *Wang in Love and Bondage*, trad. by Hongling Zhang and Jason Sommer (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), pp. 119-155.

里去了。我所认识的人，都不珍视自己的似水流年。他们甚至不知道，自己还有这么一件东西，所以一个个像丢了魂一样。¹¹

In fleeting years as water, one thing left me unsettled. But before all that, I need to explain what is 'fleeting years as water'. Proust has written a book about all that happened in his life. It's like a possessed person lying on the riverbed, observing dead leaves, driftwood, and empty bottles, flowing by and being carried away by running water. How to translate the title? It has given the translators a hard time. The most recent translation is 'pursuing the memory of time/years as water/river'. It sounds as if Proust had already died a long time ago when he was writing the book, and then his dead body suddenly stood erect. It is also too much of a mouthful to pronounce.

In my view, it would be just right to translate Proust's book as 'Fleeting Years as Water'. [...]

Time as water is everything one has and it's the only thing that really belongs to you. All others are momentary pleasure and misfortune, which join the time as water like a flash. The people that I know do not cherish their own fleeting years as water. They don't even know they actually possess such a thing, therefore all are living as if they had lost their souls.

Manifestly, Wang's refutation of the official Chinese title for *La Recherche* derives from the somewhat morbid Chinese expression, 'to pursue the memory of', as it is often used in the funereal or obituary context. Interestingly enough, forgetting and remembering actually represent the core dynamics in Proust's conception of death and resurrection. There are vital similitudes between the mourning process and the creation of writing. In Aude le Roux-Kieken's words, 'les êtres face au deuil (au sens littéral ou au sens amoureux) et dans leur relation à l'art font l'objet d'une même évaluation, quasi axiologique chez Proust'.¹² Wang is probably unaware of Proust's rather positive sentiment about death.¹³ In any case, Wang would expect his version of the title, which contains the reference to water but without the implication of death, to appeal to the Chinese readership rather more.

¹¹ Wang, 'Si shui liu nian', p. 169.

¹² Roux-Kieken goes on to explore the various similitudes between 'deuil et écriture' such as their dependence on reminiscence, their backward proceedings, and their processes of recreating reality. See Aude le Roux-Kieken, *Imaginaire et écriture de la mort dans l'œuvre de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Champion, 2005), pp. 156-177 (p. 156).

¹³ Death is, in Proust's own words, 'terriblement positive'. Cited in Roux-Kieken, p. 17.

Furthermore, Wang's four-character version '*si shui liu nian*' (hence my four-word translation), serves well as a typical Chinese collocation which conforms to the classical formation of the vast majority of Chinese locutions (known as *chengyu*, 成语). In other words, Wang's title is more catchy and indeed less 'of a mouthful to pronounce'. In the cited passage, Wang clearly attempts to nuance different modes of temporality: momentary, universal, and individual. They are not conceptually irrelevant to Proust's notions of everything being transformed 'in Time' and writing a book 'about' yet 'outside Time' based on the individual experience 'of time', as well as on Proust's idea of 'temps perdu' understood as 'wasted time'.

The added water element in both the official and Wang's titles is likely to strike Western readers of Proust. This is due to the rich, strong, and recurrent association between time and water/river found in classical Chinese literary texts. In fact, in classical Chinese thought, the perception of the water/river movement sometimes *is* the definition of 'time' (which is of course different from our modern understanding of it).¹⁴ *The Analects*, a founding text of Confucianism, for example, describes Confucius, standing by the river – rather than lying in or beneath the river as in Wang's case – saying: 'what passes away is, perhaps, like this. Day and night it never lets up'.¹⁵ On the conceptual level, it is also interesting to see how Wang's narrator's imagist perception of time and water/river itself signals an ontological *repositioning* from classical Confucian teaching of time.

Like *La Recherche*'s famous incipit 'longtemps' and ending phrase 'dans le Temps', Wang begins the novella with 'years flow (like water)' (*sui yue ru liu*, 岁月如流) and ends

¹⁴ For a discussion of the problems of talking about 'time' in ancient Chinese thought, see Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 11-12.

¹⁵ *The Analects*, IX.17, translated by D. C. Lau (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 98. 子在川上曰：“逝者如斯夫，不舍昼夜。”

with '(needing a little) more time' (*hai xuyao yidian shijian*, 还需要一点时间).¹⁶ The expression 'fleeting years as water' is repeated at least twelve times throughout the novella, with slight variations in terms of word order and substitution with synonyms, which effectively function as a Proustian leitmotif that holds miscellaneous narrative fragments together while ostensibly trying to bring these very concrete plots to an abstract and conceptual level concerning time. The following are some further examples of this structural device, often used at the beginning or towards the end of a section to either introduce or recall a different narrative focus:

流年似水，转眼就到了不惑之年。好多事情起了变化。¹⁷

Fleeting years as water, in the twinkling of an eye, I've turned forty. Many things have changed.

流年似水，有的事情一下子过去了，有的事情很久也过不去。¹⁸

Fleeting years as water, certain things quickly become past, certain things stay for a long time.

流年似水，转眼到了不惑之年。我和大家一样，对周围的事逐渐司空见惯。过去的事过去了，未过去的事也不能叫我惊讶。¹⁹

Fleeting years as water, in the twinkling of an eye, I've turned forty. Like everyone else, I've gradually become used to things around us. What's past is past, what has not yet passed will no longer surprise me either.

虽然岁月如流，什么都会过去，但总有些东西发生了就不能抹杀。²⁰

Although as water time flows, everything will pass, but there are always things which, once happening, can't be effaced.

我说过，在似水流年里，有一些事情叫我日夜不安。²¹

As I said, in the fleeting years as water, certain things make me uneasy day and night.

¹⁶ Wang, '*Si shui liu nian*', p. 124; p. 198.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 130.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 131.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 142.

²⁰ *Ibid.* P. 166.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 186.

For a novella of about seventy-pages of the Chinese edition used, there are twenty-two divisions, some sections being much longer than others. Indeed, this fragmentary and scattered narrative structure formally embodies what Wang understands by Proust's 'fleeting years as water': 'It's like a possessed person lying on the riverbed, observing dead leaves, driftwood, and empty bottles, flowing by and being carried away by running water'.²² Perhaps Wang's variable formulations of 'fleeting years as water' are most reminiscent of the final line of Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann*: 'le souvenir d'une certaine image n'est que le regret d'un certain instant; et les maisons, les routes, les avenues, sont fugitives, hélas, comme les années'.²³ Everything in time passes away like fleeting water.

Finally, just as Proust's narrator debates what to and not to be included 'in Time' as 'la matière de [son] livre' towards the end of the novel, Wang's narrator self-consciously selects and adapts material from his 'fleeting years as water', tentatively making a certain distinction between memory and history: 'if I wrote down all these details, it would be a historical method. For now, I don't know how to employ such a method yet. So I recount my fleeting years as water [...]'²⁴ Wang's emphasis on the 'fictional' writings of hilarious and grotesque anecdotes against the atrocious backdrop of the Cultural Revolution enhances the bitter irony of the novella. The only fictional things are the names of the characters and places, as the narrator concludes:

写小说不可以用真名，[...] 所以在本书里，没有一个名字是真的。[...] 人名不真，地点不真，唯一真实的是我写到的事。不管是龟头血肿还是贺先生跳楼，都是真的。

We can't use real names when writing novels, [...] Therefore in this book, none of the names is real. [...] Names of the characters unreal, names of

²² *Ibid.* p. 169.

²³ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 420.

²⁴ Wang, '*Sì shuǐ liú nián*', p. 142. 如果我要把这一切写出来，就要用史笔。我现在还没有这种笔。所以我叙述我的似水流年

the places unreal, only the things I write about are real. Whether it's Swelling Glans or the jump-out-of-the-building Mr. He, it's all real [...].²⁵

Thus, in addition to the Proustian themes of time and memory, Wang seems to have also picked up the aspect of *La Recherche* characteristic of an *autofiction*, in which the author deliberately takes a fictional diversion from real autobiographical events. Just like Proust's somewhat apocryphal revelation of his protagonist-narrator's name as 'Marcel', who 'évolue pourtant dans un univers en grande partie imaginaire',²⁶ Wang's protagonist-narrator is named 'Wang Er', literally Wang Number Two, which points to the author's status as the second son of the family in the traditional methods of ranking sons.²⁷

II.3. Yu Hua's *Cris dans la bruine* (*Zai xiyu zhong huhan*, 在细雨中呼喊) (1991)²⁸

II.3.1. Prefaces

Yu Hua is a key member of the Chinese literary movement which briefly flourished in the 1980's, known as the 'Chinese Avant-garde Literature' (*Zhongguo xianfengpai wenxue*, 中国先锋派文学). Published in 1991, *Cris* is Yu's first novel, the same year as the complete Chinese publication of *La Recherche* appeared. The novel is often said to mark the writer's intellectual and artistic transformation from the Kafkaesque world of absurdity and brevity

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 143.

²⁶ The word 'autofiction' was first coined by Serge Doubrovsky in 1977. Vincent Colonna. *L'autofiction, essai sur la fictionalisation de soi en littérature*. Linguistics. Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), 1989, p. 16; p. 24. <<https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00006609>> [accessed on 07 November 2014].

²⁷ In fact, 'most of Wang Xiaobo's protagonists bear the same name, Wang Er'. See Hongling Zhang and Jason Sommer, 'Introduction', in *Wang in Love and Bondage: Three Novellas by Wang Xiaobo*, tr. by H. Zhang and J. Sommer (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), pp. iv-x.

²⁸ YU Hua, *Zai xiyu zhong huhan* (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 2011); translated into French as *Cris dans la bruine* by Jacqueline Guyvallet (Paris: Actes Sud, 2003); translated into English as *Cries in the Drizzle* by Allan Hepburn Barr (New York: Anchor Books, 2007).

to, in Yu's own words, 'real(istic) things' (*xianshi de dongxi*, 现实的东西).²⁹ The critic Isabelle Rabut speaks of 'une métamorphose indiscutable'.³⁰

The author offers two explanations for his change of literary direction: first, 'people change, ideas change, times change';³¹ second, 'while composing, [the writer] must be looking for the most appropriate way to represent [the particular subject of] the novel'.³² Concerning the first reason, we can see that Yu was living up to his self-proclaimed 'avant-gardist' status. His turn from Kafka to Proust as a source of literary inspiration when he was composing *Cris* was largely affected by the major translation projects in China in the 1980's. Like many other Chinese 'avant-gardist' writers, Yu has no knowledge of any foreign language. Yet, it is the discovery of foreign literatures *in translation* that played the essential role in making those writers' works 'avant-garde', as Yu confesses on one occasion: 'only in foreign literature can I really understand writing techniques; and then through my own writing practice, I learn the richness of literary expression'.³³ As WU Liang duly observes, the 'common background for Chinese avant-garde literature and its promoters' are 'rapid shifts among styles', 'knowledge and imitation', 'disconnected, fragmented, shallow, and abstruse styles of expression', 'the borrowing of imported subjects, modes of consciousness, and sentence structure'.³⁴ As far as the particular subject or the central theme of *Cris* is concerned, Yu remarks in one of the prefaces that it is 'a book about

²⁹ Cited in WANG Shicheng (王世诚), *Xiangsi ersheng: Yu Hua* (向死而生: 余华) (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 2005), p. 159.

³⁰ Isabelle Rabut, 'Yu Hua', *Magazine littéraire* (March 2004), p. 60.

³¹ Cited in Wang Shicheng, *Yu Hua*, p. 158. 人在变, 想法在变, 时代在变。

³² *Ibid.* 写着写着肯定会寻找一种最适合这篇小说的表达方式。

³³ Yu Hua, *Shuohua* (Talks, 说话) (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 2002), p. 4. 只有在外国文学里, 我才真正了解写作的技巧, 然后通过自己的写作去认识文学有着多么丰富的表达。

³⁴ WU Liang, 'Re-memembering the Cultural Revolution', in *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, ed. by Pang-Yuan Chi, David Der-wei Wang (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 124-136 (pp. 124-125).

memory' and especially the 'time in memory'.³⁵ Due to the major thematic resonance, as well as Yu's explicit references to Proust in the new prefaces of later editions of the novel, Yu has often been asked if this novel had been directly inspired by Proust's *La Recherche*. Yu's answer is rather equivocal: 'I hope so'.³⁶ As the following analysis will demonstrate, we have legitimate reasons to believe that Yu had indeed come across at least the first volume of *La Recherche* when writing *Cris*.³⁷ Given the publication year of *Cris* (1991), Yu had perhaps not managed to read *La Recherche* in its entirety until much later, which, in turn, could explain his equivocal and in many ways diplomatic answer cited above. It could also explain why Proust was explicitly mentioned only in the prefaces of the much later editions of the novel.

Secondly, Yu's firm intention to look for the right novelistic form to represent time and memory makes Proust's *La Recherche* an ideal aesthetic inspiration – rather than an exact aesthetic model – for Yu to follow, due to his in all likelihood partial – rather than holistic – reading and understanding of *La Recherche* when he was composing *Cris*. In this respect, as mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter I, Maurois's preface must have played an important role in generally informing Yu about the Proustian aesthetics of time and memory. Maurois's preface is further complemented by Luo's Chinese preface entitled 'An Attempted Critical Introduction to *La Recherche*', written in 1988.³⁸ While elaborating on Maurois's points on Proust's poor health condition and the central themes of *La Recherche*, Luo tries to offer an overview of Proust's place in French literary history since Montaigne and Balzac. For the benefit of the Chinese readership, he also frequently makes

³⁵ Yu, 'Preface', *Huhan*, p. 4. 一本关于时间的书。[...] 也就是记忆中的时间。

³⁶ LIN Zhou, *Shengming de baidu (The Ferry of Life, 生命的摆渡)* (Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 1998), p. 166. 我希望如此。

³⁷ The Chinese translation of *Du côté de chez Swann* came out in 1989.

³⁸ LUO Dagang (罗大冈), 'Shilun Zhuiyi sishui nianhua' (试论《追忆似水年华》), in *Zhuiyi sishui nianhua* vol. 1, pp. 19-30.

references to the Chinese classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (mid-18th century). Some of Luo's formulations, find distinct echoes in Yu's prefaces of *Cris*.

For instance, Luo remarks: 'the innovation of *La Recherche* lies in the fact that it is the content which determines the form. As the author was mulling over a new content, a new form has naturally emerged'.³⁹ Literary 'avant-gardists' like Yu were particularly sensitive to formal innovations. The author retrospectively justifies the structure of *Cris* in the preface as follows: 'I think this should be a book about memory. Its structure originates from our feeling and experience of time, and more precisely, those of the time known to us, that is, time in memory',⁴⁰ a structure that follows what he calls 'the logic of memory' (*jiyi de luoji*, 记忆的逻辑).⁴¹

Another important remark is Luo's reiteration of the Proustian 'real life', which has previously been highlighted by Maurois:

他认为人的真正的生命是回忆中的生活，或者说，人的生活只有在回忆中方形成“真实的生活”，回忆中的生活比当时当地的现实生活更为现实。《似水年华》整部小说就是建筑在回忆是人生的精华这个概念之上的。⁴²

He [Proust] considers that the real life is the life in memory, or, our life can be 'real life' only in memory. The life in memory is more 'real' than the reality of the present time and place. The entire novel of *La Recherche* is constructed on the idea that memory is the essence of life.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 26. 《似水年华》的创新是内容决定形式，由于作者心中酝酿新的内容，所以自然而然用新的形式来表现。

⁴⁰ Yu, 'Preface for the Italian Translation', in *Huhan*, p. 4. 我想，这应该是一本关于记忆的书。他的结构来自于对时间的感受，确切的说是对已知时间的感受，也就是记忆中的之间。

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁴² Luo, 'Critical Introduction', p. 21.

The Franco-Chinese writer François Cheng makes a very similar observation in his ‘Proustian quotation’ cited in the Chinese preface of *Le Dit de Tianyi*: ‘the real life is a re-lived life, and that re-lived life is obtained through the re-creation by memory and language’.⁴³

In comparison, although Yu does not appear to have such a quasi-metaphysical take on the notion of ‘real life’, he is nevertheless convinced of the idea that a new life can be ‘re-lived’ through and in memory: ‘the moving part of remembering is that you could make new choices, reconnect and recombine those unrelated past things, in order to obtain a brand-new past’.⁴⁴

In a different preface, prior to the explicit discussion of Proust, Yu’s reformulation of ‘memory’ is drawn all the closer to Proust’s involuntary memory crystalized in the madeleine episode:

我想这应该就是记忆。当慢慢的人生长途走向尾声的时候，财富荣耀也成身外之物，记忆却显得极其珍贵。一个偶然被唤醒的记忆，就像是小小的牡丹花一样，可以覆盖浩浩荡荡的天下事。⁴⁵

I think this must be memory. As the slow and long journey of life is coming to an end, wealth and glory have become external worldly possessions, but memory has become extremely precious. An accidentally revived recollection, just like that little peony, could majestically cover all the matters of the world.

The ‘little peony’ is a continued reference to the classic poetic lines by LU You (陆游 1125-1209) cited at the beginning of this preface: ‘forgetting all matters of the world as I grow

⁴³ In actual fact, this is Cheng’s rephrase of a Proustian idea. François Cheng, ‘Zhongwenban zixu’ (‘Preface for the Chinese translation’) in *Tianyi yan*, trans. by YANG Nianxi (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 2009), pp. 1-4 (p. 2). 真正的生命是再活过的生命。而那再活过的生命是由记忆语言之再创造而获得的。 See also Part II, I.3.

⁴⁴ Yu, ‘Preface for the Italian Translation’, in *Huhan*, p. 5. 回忆的动人之处就在于可以重新选择，可以将那些毫无关联的往事重新组合起来，从而获得了全新的过去。

⁴⁵ Yu, ‘Preface for the Korean Translation’, in *Huhan*, p. 7.

old, but still seeing the peony in my dreams'.⁴⁶ Yu's elaboration of an 'accidentally revived recollection' through the 'little peony' is a palpable analogy to Proust's involuntary memory through the 'petite madeleine'. Furthermore, as the national flower of China as well as a topos in traditional Chinese literature and art, Yu's evocation of peony can be seen as his first creative attempt to appropriate *La Recherche* and to readapt Proust to the Chinese context.

As aforementioned, in terms of the exact structure of *Cris*, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Yu's alleged 'logic of memory' may be based on his close study of the structure of *La Recherche*. For example, Yu's *Cris* bears no mark of Proust's signature narrative technique of 'double focalisation interne' embodied by the dual identity of a protagonist and narrator. But what must have been inspirational for Yu is the idea of an almost 'organic' connection between a fragmented narrative structure and the thematic representations of time and memory. Yu explains his 'logic of memory' as follows: 'I considered it to be my structure then. Time, broken into pieces, reappears at the speed of light, because throughout the narrative there is always the 'standpoint of today', which governs the rearrangements of memory'.⁴⁷ Throughout his short stories in the 1980's, violence and death were Yu's favourite themes. Both the length of a novel and the thematic novelty (of time and memory) presented a great aesthetic challenge to Yu in the late 1980's. In one of his interviews, Yu suggests that he had struggled to find a clear overall structure and adopted a heuristic approach, rather like Proust's own creative method, to the writing of the novel. Yu actually describes the birth of the novel as a 'misunderstanding' (*wuhui*, 误

⁴⁶ Cited in Yu, 'Korean Translation', p. 6. Translation is mine. 老去已忘天下事，梦中犹见牡丹花。

⁴⁷ Yu, 'Italian Translation', p. 5. “记忆的逻辑”，我当时这样认为自己的结构，时间成为了碎片，并且以光的速度来回闪现，因为在全部的叙述里，始终贯穿着“今天的立场”，也就是重新排列记忆的统治者。

会).⁴⁸ Yu's suggestion indicates that the final structural unity of the novel following the 'logic of memory' is in many ways perceived in retrospect by the writer, through self-analysis. Such a phenomenon is reminiscent of Proust's narrator's characterization of the aesthetic achievement of Balzac and Wagner: '[...] se regardant travailler comme s'ils étaient à la fois l'ouvrier et le juge, ont tiré de cette auto-contemplation une beauté nouvelle, extérieure et supérieure à l'œuvre, lui imposant rétroactivement une unité, une grandeur qu'elle n'a pas'.⁴⁹

Yu's prefaces have shown an intuitive understanding of time and memory in relation to *La Recherche*. Hans Robert Jauss, in *Zeit und Erinnerung in Marcel Prousts A la recherche du temps perdu* (1955), often considered the first formal analysis of the temporal system in *La Recherche*, precisely acknowledges Proust's aesthetic achievement as the innovation of a 'forme narrative des mémoires', a 'distance intérieure du souvenir' and a 'poétique du souvenir'.⁵⁰ Additionally, Jauss recognizes that the questions of genesis and genre of *La Recherche*, which have formerly been examined separately, essentially relates back to one single problem of narrative and structural order.⁵¹ He further demonstrates how time itself, as the principle of composition, founds the ultimate unity of the novel.⁵² Of course, it is highly unlikely that Yu has come across Jauss's work on Proust, even through second-hand knowledge. But the apparent affinity between Jauss and Yu's perception of Proust's aesthetic innovation could indicate to us a more specific direction in which Yu intuitively and creatively engages with Proust.

⁴⁸ Lin, *Shengming de baidu*, p. 160.

⁴⁹ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 666.

⁵⁰ See Pascale Fravallo-Tane, *À la recherche du temps perdu en France et en Allemagne (1913-1958): 'Dans une sorte de langue étrangère ...'* (Paris: Champion, 2008), p. 380.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 388.

Moreover, Yu notably approaches Proust's work through the angle of a *roman d'enfance*, with a certain self-identification: 'I need to clarify that this [*Cris*] is not an autobiography, but it gathers a lot of feelings and understandings from my childhood and adolescence. Of course, such feelings and understandings are revived through memory'.⁵³ This remark is then followed by Yu's elaboration on a scene found at the very first pages of *La Recherche*:

马塞尔·普鲁斯特在他那部像人生一样漫长的《追忆似水年华》里，有一段精美的描述。当他深夜在床上躺下来的时候，他的脸放到了枕头上，枕套的绸缎可能是穿越了丝绸之路，从中国运抵法国的。光滑的绸缎让普鲁斯特产生了清新和娇嫩的感受，然后唤醒了他对自己童年脸庞的记忆。他说他睡在枕头上时，仿佛是睡在自己童年的脸庞上。这样的记忆就是古希腊人所说的“和谐”，当普鲁斯特的呼吸因为肺病困扰变得断断续续时，对过去生活的记忆成为了维持他体内生机的气质，让他的生活在叙述里变得流畅和奇妙无比。⁵⁴

Marcel Proust, dans son œuvre, qui est aussi longue que la vie, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, nous offre une belle description. Très tard, lorsqu'il s'allongeait au lit, il appuyait ses joues contre l'oreiller. *La taie d'oreiller en soie aurait dû traverser la Route de la Soie et être transportée de la Chine en France*. La soie luisante donnait à Proust un sentiment frais et tendre, et suscitait en lui le souvenir des joues de son enfance. Il raconte que lorsqu'il mettait sa tête sur l'oreiller, c'était comme s'il dormait contre les joues de son enfance. Une telle mémoire est bien 'harmonia' d'après les anciens Grecs. Au moment que la respiration de Proust était rendue intermittente à cause de son asthme, le souvenir de sa vie passée est devenu la substance qui maintiendrait son dynamisme intérieur, et a rendu fluide et merveilleuse sa vie dans le récit.⁵⁵

Yu evidently refers to the second paragraph of *La Recherche* (and onwards):

J'appuyais tendrement mes joues contre les belles joues de l'oreiller qui, pleines et fraîches, sont comme les joues de notre enfance. Je frottais une allumette pour regarder ma montre. Bientôt minuit. C'est l'instant où le

⁵³ Yu, 'Korean Translation', p. 7. 我要说明的是，这虽然不是一部自传，里面却是云集了我童年和少年时期的感受和理解，当然这样的感受和理解是以记忆的方式得到了重温。

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ I have chosen to translate Yu's passage into French in order to demonstrate a closer lexical similarity to Proust's original. The italics are mine.

malade, qui a été obligé de partir en voyage et a dû coucher dans un hôtel inconnu, réveillé par une crise [...] ⁵⁶

Yu's passage is a Chinese appropriation of Proust *par excellence*. He overtly implants a new experience into the narrator's childhood memory by evoking a (second) ancient topos, namely the Silk Road, for cultural exchange between China and the West. Yu further stresses the 'harmonious' aspect of such an operation, as if he were trying to justify his decision to make this rather 'artificial' literary connection between Proust and China.

Proust's, or rather, Proust's narrator's voice is displaced and rewritten to suit Yu's purposes, which consequently produces 'a model of the dialogic'. ⁵⁷ The significance of Yu's fictional implantation is that it recognizes and constructs a frame, a context, a network ⁵⁸ that allows readers (and indeed the writer too) to imagine themselves and to be imagined, and encourages them to read both Proust's and Yu's works from the perspective of Chinese and world literature right from the start. In this respect, Yu employs the topos of the Silk Road, with his emphasis on communication or communicability ('aurait dû traverser') rather than origin, to symbolize the world of literary relations. Such a cross-cultural intertextual practice – highly common in contemporary Chinese literature – also implicitly expresses the post-Mao cultural complex about Chinese literature's joining of the canon of world literature.

The etymology of the Greek word 'harmonia' refers to a 'means of joining or fastening', which is immediately relevant to Yu's cross-cultural remark. The Greek concept

⁵⁶ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 4.

⁵⁷ I borrow the phrase from Margaret Gray who herself appropriates this notion from Michel Serres. Gray is more concerned with 'the dialogue as exclusion rather than exchange' in the case of Proust's own practice of 'pastiche' Flaubert's critical language. My focus here, however, is on the dialogic exchange and inclusion through the Chinese writers' creative imagination and fictional reconfiguration. See Gray, *Postmodern Proust*, p. 9.

⁵⁸ I am indebted to Plottel's formulation of intertextuality, see J. P. Plottel, 'Introduction', in *Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism*, ed. by Jeanne Pariser Plottel and Hanna Kurz Charney (New York: New York Library Forum, 1978), pp. xi-xx (p. xiv.).

of harmony is notably associated with Pythagoreanism in origin, as Liba Taub observes: ‘the earliest surviving use of the term to refer to cosmic harmony may be found at the end of Plato’s (c. 429-347 BCE) dialogue *Timaeus*, where the Pythagorean Timaeus explains that: “the motions which are naturally akin to the divine principle within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe”’.⁵⁹ More specifically, *harmonia* refers to ‘the cosmic fitting together and to the divine sound of music that can be heard by mortals, allowing them to imitate the cosmic harmony and to be at one with the universe’.⁶⁰ However, the concept of harmony (*he*, 和) has an ancient root in Daoist and Confucian traditions too. In fact, the earliest Confucian texts also indicate that the meaning of *he* ‘mostly has to do with sounds and how sounds interact with one another’.⁶¹ Furthermore, whether it was intended or not, in retrospect, Yu’s mention of ‘harmony’ in this new preface written in 2003 could potentially carry a political overtone – it *prefigures* the advent of a new socio-economic vision proposed by HU Jintao, the ‘paramount leader’ of China between 2002 and 2012, known as the ‘(Socialist) Harmonious Society’ (*hexie shehui*, 和谐社会).⁶² Despite Yu’s attribution of ‘harmony’ to the ancient Greeks, most Chinese readers would rather make a connection to the latter discourse of contemporary Chinese political thought, which, again, indirectly entails another ideological colouring of Proust’s work in the Chinese context, from the rise of bourgeois values under the leadership of Deng to the promotion of a ‘socialist harmonious society’ under Hu which aims to retreat from class and class struggle.⁶³

⁵⁹ Liba Taub, *Ancient Meteorology* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Chenyang LI, ‘The Confucian Ideal of Harmony’, *Philosophy East and West*, 56.4 (2006), 583-603 (p. 583).

⁶² ‘Harmonious Society’ was officially propagated from 2005 onwards.

⁶³ See Chapter I Section I.1. For a further clarification of Hu’s ‘harmonious society’, see Guoxin XING, ‘Hu Jintao’s Political Thinking and Legitimacy Building: A Post-Marxist Perspective’, *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 34.4 (2009): 213-226.

The date of this new preface is particularly revealing also in terms of Yu's personal and professional engagement with cross-cultural politics. 2003 was the year in which the French translation of *Cris* was published and favourably received in France. This year also marked the ninetieth anniversary of the first publication of *Du côté de chez Swann*. 2003-4 was the (*Cross*) *Year of China* in France as it marked the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China, and Yu, along with a few other established Chinese writers including the recent Nobel Prize Laureate MO Yan, was named a Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Ministry of Culture. Yu's *Cris* was the reason for such an honour. *Magazine littéraire*⁶⁴ dedicated an entire issue to Chinese and Franco-Chinese literature and philosophy which also features Yu. Back in China, in 2004 and subsequently 2005, two competing new Chinese translations of *Du côté de chez Swann* were ceremoniously published and attracted considerable media attention. All of a sudden, Proust seems to have become the cultural ambassador of France to China. In this way, the intertextual relation between *Cris* and *La Recherche* evolves from implicit literary allusion to explicit reference to miniature rewriting and finally to the politics of cultural exchange. Could this intercultural literary exchange and mutual recognition be what Yu envisaged as 'harmonia' according to the ancient Greeks?

As has been suggested and will be further demonstrated in the subsequent exploration of the prologue of *Cris*, there is a certain personal identification with Proust in Yu's approach, which will later apply to Wei and Cheng too.⁶⁵ However, there is also a certain irony in the way they perceive Proust in relation to their own works: on the one hand, they contend that their autobiographical novels are by no means autobiographies; on the other hand, as we have already seen in Yu's passage, Proust is utterly confounded with

⁶⁴ *Magazine littéraire*, March 2004.

⁶⁵ See the summary of Cheng's interview in Part II, I.3.

his protagonist-narrator, 'Marcel'. There is hence a curious combination between what Roland Barthes identifies as 'marcellisme', which designates 'cet intérêt très spécial que les lecteurs peuvent porter à la vie de Marcel Proust', and 'proustisme', which 'ne serait que le goût d'une œuvre ou d'une manière littéraire'.⁶⁶ Perhaps it is precisely this irony generated in the creative reception of Proust that strengthens Proust's, not only Chinese, but world literary posterity. Joseph Bami, in the *Avant-propos* of *Lecteurs de Proust au XX^e siècle et au début du XXI^e*, duly observes that the well-established distinctions in Proust studies between the author and the narrator, between the narrator and the protagonist, 'n'apparaî[ssent] pas nécessairement au sein de toutes les lectures des écrivains étudiés'. Ultimately, 'chacun d'eux ou presque s'[est] composé des deux ensemble'.⁶⁷ Barthes further clarifies as follows:

La postérité donne de plus en plus raison à Proust : son œuvre n'est plus lue seulement comme un monument de la littérature universelle, mais comme l'expression passionnante d'un sujet absolument personnel qui revient sans cesse à sa propre vie, non comme à un *curriculum vitae*, mais comme à un étoilement de circonstances et de figures. De plus en plus nous nous prenons à aimer non 'Proust' (nom civil d'un auteur fiché dans les Histoires de la littérature), mais 'Marcel', être singulier, à la fois enfant et adulte, *puer senilis*, passionné et sage, proie de manies excentriques et lieu d'une réflexion souveraine sur le monde, l'amour, l'art, le temps, la mort.⁶⁸

II.3.2. Prologue to *Cris*

Compared to his open acknowledgement of Proust on time and memory in the prefaces, Yu's engagement with *La Recherche* in the prologue is implicit and much more subtle. *Cris* thus begins:

⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), p. 319.

⁶⁷ Joseph Bami, *Lecteurs de Proust au XX^e siècle et au début du XXI^e siècle*, vol. 1 (Caen: Lettres modernes Minard, 2010), p. 7. The two volumes explore Proust's literary posterity exclusively in the Western context, with a primary focus on Francophone authors.

⁶⁸ Barthes, *Bruissement*, p. 319.

1965 年的时候，一个孩子开始了对黑夜不可名状的恐惧。我回想起了那个细雨飘扬的夜晚，当时我已经睡了，我是那么的小巧，就像玩具似的被放在床上。屋檐滴水所显示的，是寂静的存在，我的逐渐入睡是对雨中水滴的逐渐遗忘。⁶⁹

Au cours de l'année 1965, d'indescriptibles terreurs nocturnes s'emparèrent d'un enfant. Le souvenir de cette nuit où flottait la bruine a resurgi dans ma mémoire: je suis couché sur mon lit, posé là comme un jouet, tellement menu et délicat. L'eau dégouttant de l'auvent de la maison révèle l'existence du silence et mon endormissement progressif est un oubli graduel des gouttes de pluie.⁷⁰

Three key elements emerge from these opening lines, which immediately echo the iconic Chinese title of *La Recherche* ('pursuing the memory of time/years as water/river'): time, memory, and water. From our intercultural perspective, this passage enjoys a *double* cultural referent, especially among its Chinese readership. First, the association among the three elements is an 'allusion artistique' according to Annick Bouillaguet's intertextual theory, which is 'beaucoup plus reconnaissable pour le lecteur' because the material alluded to 'appartient à un fonds culturel commun'. She continues: 'le lecteur, s'il ne peut identifier la source, a du moins le sentiment d'être ici en présence d'une légende que peut-être il connaît, et qui ressortit aux archétypes autour desquels, selon Jung, se construit l'inconscient collectif'.⁷¹ Nevertheless, in previous analyses, we have identified several most widely circulated Chinese philosophical and literary sources for the time-water relation and expression, which confirms, in a scholarly fashion, that 'feeling of a legend' in the Chinese reader's 'collective unconscious'.⁷² Then, as Proust's work has been canonized in China – as 'pursuing the memory of time/years as water/river' rather than 'à la recherche du temps

⁶⁹ Yu, *Huhan*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Yu Hua, *Cris*, p. 9. Again, I have chosen the French rather than the English translation of the novel in the attempt to show a closer lexical similarity to Proust's *La Recherche*.

⁷¹ Annick Bouillaguet, *Marcel Proust: Le Jeu intertextuel* (Paris: Edition du Titre, 1990), p. 63.

⁷² These cultural sources will continue to be explored in Part II on Cheng.

perdu’ – since its integral publication in 1991, the prologue of *Cris* has effectively turned from an ‘allusion artistique’ (to the Chinese cultural heritage) to an ‘allusion technique’ specifically to Proust, the latter of which is then explicitly acknowledged by Yu’s new prefaces. The ‘artistic’ and ‘technical’ allusions are mutually complementary rather than exclusive. In Bouillaguet’s words, ‘la répartition entre ces deux nouveaux ensembles est peu rigoureuse car ils ne sont guère étanches’.⁷³

The setting, ambiance, and basic scenario of the prologue of *Cris* closely resemble that of *La Recherche*: a young boy, a wakeful sleeper, is lying in bed alone in the dark, having a series of seemingly illogical flashbacks and manifesting existential anxieties and fears. Yu’s depiction of these details even presents several lexical, syntactical, and diegetic parallels to *La Recherche*.

Yu’s sentence – ‘pendant une très longue période, je n’osai m’endormir, couché dans le noir’⁷⁴ – is reminiscent of Proust’s famous incipit: ‘longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure. [...] “Je m’endors”’.⁷⁵ It must be pointed out that the adverbial expression, ‘pendant une très longue période’, in the Chinese original is almost identical to the Chinese translation of Proust’s ‘longtemps’ (in the *First Translation*).⁷⁶

Like Proust’s Combray, Yu’s book about time and memory begins with a childhood place, i.e. Nanmen (南门). While Proust’s narrator recalls ‘le bruit de la sonnette du jardin de Combray’ with dizziness (‘j’avais le vertige’) at the very end of *La Recherche*,⁷⁷ Yu’s protagonist physically returns to Nanmen in a ‘brouhaha de voix’ (杂乱的人声), ‘au milieu de hurlements’ (在叫嚷嚷的声音里), with ‘une vague réminiscence’ (残留的记忆) and

⁷³ Bouillaguet, *Jeu intertextuel*, p. 163.

⁷⁴ Yu, *Cris*, p. 11; Huhan, p. 4. 很长一段时间里，我躺在黑暗的床上不敢入睡

⁷⁵ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Proust, *First Translation*, p. 3. 在很长一段时期里

⁷⁷ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 624.

'l'heureux sentiment' (欣喜地感到).⁷⁸ Georges Poulet carried out one of the first book-length studies of the 'rigoureux parallélisme qui existe chez Proust entre la dialectique du temps et celle de l'espace'.⁷⁹ He notes: 'dès le premier moment – on pourrait presque dire aussi: dès le premier *lieu* – du récit, l'œuvre proustienne s'affirme comme une recherche non seulement du temps, mais de l'espace perdu'.⁸⁰ Yu's conceptual awareness of place in addition to time, in relation to memory, is evident, and this particular aspect of Yu's Proustian engagement is quite unique among the Chinese and Franco-Chinese authors of our corpus.

Proust's narrator's analogy to a sick man who feels temporarily relieved at the thought of seeing the daybreak through the opening of the door also finds a certain echo in Yu's prologue:

[Proust] C'est l'instant où le malade, [...] réveillé par une crise, se réjouit en apercevant sous la porte une raie de jour. Quel bonheur, c'est déjà le matin!⁸¹

[Yu] A mon réveil le lendemain à l'aube, je constatais que j'étais encore vivant et comme je regardais le soleil pénétrer par les fentes de la porte, la joie me mettait dans un état d'extrême excitation.⁸²

当我翌日清晨醒来时，发现自己还活着，看着阳光从门缝里照射进来，我的喜悦使我激动无比。⁸³

Childhood terror haunts the memory of both wakeful sleepers at night:

[Proust] Ou bien en dormant j'avais rejoint sans effort un âge à jamais révolu de ma vie primitive, retrouvé telle de mes terreurs enfantines comme celle que mon grand-oncle me tirât par mes boucles et qu'avait

⁷⁸ Yu, *Huhan*, pp. 276-77.

⁷⁹ Georges Poulet, *L'Espace proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 88.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁸¹ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 4.

⁸² Yu, *Cris*, p. 12.

⁸³ Yu, *Huhan*, p. 4.

dissipé le jour – date pour moi d’une ère nouvelle – où on les avait coupées.⁸⁴

[Yu] [...] d’indescriptibles terreurs nocturnes s’emparèrent d’un enfant. [...] j’étais gagné par le sommeil, [...] les cris d’une femme, tels des sanglots, me parvinrent du lointain, une voix rauque retentit soudain dans la nuit jusqu’alors parfaitement silencieuse, faisant trembler ces années d’enfance dans ma mémoire.⁸⁵

[...] 一个孩子开始了对黑夜的不可名状的恐惧。[...] [在我安全而又平静地]进入睡眠时，[...] 一个女人哭泣般的呼喊声从远处传来，嘶哑的声音在当初寂静无比的黑夜里突然想起，是我此刻回想中的童年的我颤抖不已。⁸⁶

It is through the similar experience of disorientation and confusion in the darkness, accompanied by a certain detachment of the self, that we enter both novels. Proust’s narrator speaks of a transmigration of the soul [‘métempsychose’] and remarks: ‘aussitôt je recouvrais la vue et j’étais bien étonné de trouver autour de moi une obscurité, douce et reposante pour mes yeux’.⁸⁷ Yu’s narrator remarks: ‘je me vois : un enfant effrayé ouvrant de grands yeux craintifs et dont la physionomie est indistincte dans le noir’.⁸⁸

Finally, the structure of both prologues revolves around seemingly random flashbacks of memory. Uncertainties of time and space permeate both narrators’ accounts:

[Proust] Puis renaissait le souvenir d’une nouvelle attitude. [...] Ces évocations tournoyantes et confuses ne duraient jamais que quelques secondes; souvent, ma brève incertitude du lieu où je me trouvais ne distinguait pas mieux les unes des autres les diverses suppositions dont elle était faite, que nous n’isolons, en voyant un cheval courir, les positions successives que nous montre le kinétoscope.⁸⁹

[Yu] Un autre souvenir ne tarde pas à suivre: celui d’agneaux blancs accourant sur l’herbe verte du bord de la rivière. Manifestement, il s’agit

⁸⁴ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 4.

⁸⁵ Yu, *Cris*, p. 9.

⁸⁶ Yu, *Huhan*, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Yu, *Cris*, p. 9; *Huhan*, p. 2. 我看到了自己，一个受惊的孩子睁大恐惧的眼睛，他的脸型在黑暗里模糊不清。

⁸⁹ Proust, *RTP I*, pp. 6-7.

d'une impression diurne, d'une caresse après l'inquiétude générée par le souvenir précédent. Mais il m'est difficile de déterminer la place où je me trouvais quand je l'ai éprouvé.⁹⁰

紧随而来的另一个记忆，是几只羊羔从河边青草上走过来。显然这是对白昼的印象，是对前一个记忆造成的不安进行抚摸。只是我难以确定自己获得这个印象时所处的位置。⁹¹

As can be seen, even the exact contents of both narrators' dreamy visions find 'correspondences' – Proust's 'running horse' metamorphoses thus into a few 'moving lambs'.⁹²

As we will see in Part II, Yu's prologue resonates not only with that of *La Recherche*, its key element of an unknown woman's haunting cry is additionally transformed into the mysterious *voix féminine* – hence *la Voie* – in Cheng's prologue,⁹³ which itself has a distinct Proustian echo, albeit in different ways from Yu's.

II.4. Wei Hui's Short Stories

Wei Hui⁹⁴ is a woman writer representative of the literary group generally known as 'The New Generation' (sometimes also translated as 'The Late Generation', *wanshengdai*, 晚生代) in China, i.e. writers born in the late 1970's and the 1980's, after the economic reform and the opening up of China. Those writers' thematic concerns have come far out of the shadow of the Cultural Revolution and the official Communist propaganda. Being an ardent Francophile, Wei explicitly cites Proust in her works probably more than any other Chinese

⁹⁰ Yu, *Cris*, p. 10.

⁹¹ Yu, *Huhan*, p. 3.

⁹² It should be noted that Jacqueline's French translation slightly 'overcompensates' Yu's original which specifies neither the colour of the lambs nor the hurriedness of their movement implied by the verb 'accourir'.

⁹³ 'The Mysterious Female' is a key theme in Daoism.

⁹⁴ Weihui, the two characters together, is her first name as well as her pen name. Her real family name is Zhou.

writer. Due to her 'decadent'⁹⁵ approach to literary representations of sexuality, some of her works are banned in China, which consequently generates media sensationalism once they have been translated in the West.⁹⁶

In his study, Yinde Zhang exhaustively notes Wei's references to Proust in her various short stories, without, however, further commenting on the blatant consumerist ideology that conditions such literary productions, an ideology that is palpably reflected in this new twist of economic reform known as the 'marketization' (*shichang hua*, 市场化) in the 1990's.⁹⁷ My following analysis will evaluate the extent to which such an ideological backdrop has given rise to certain aesthetic values in Wei's creative intertextual engagement with Proust. The focus is on the formal and thematic features of those Proustian references in the stories.

The figure of Proust is primarily used for characterization. References to Proust are always concretized in a character's activity of reading *La Recherche*. One of the technical reasons for this intertextual feature is that, in contrast to Wang and Yu's narratives which heavily rely on the background material of the Cultural Revolution, all of Wei's stories (containing Proustian echoes) are set in cosmopolitan Shanghai in the 1990's, where

⁹⁵ See Footnote 5 of Chapter I for a qualification of the term. Interestingly, according to Wang Hongjian, both Wang and Yu could also be considered as 'decadentist' writers in the Chinese context. See his doctoral thesis, *Performing Perversion*.

⁹⁶ A good example would be her novel *Shanghai Baby*, translated into English by Bruce Humes (London: Robinson, 2001), or the same title in French, translated by Cora Whist (Paris: Philippe Picquier, 2001). The fact that the book was censored in China is used for its Western publicity. This phenomenon may be best captured in Sheldon H. Lu's words: 'predictably, being "banned in China!" enhanced domestic curiosity about and international marketability of the authors and novels. There was even more reason for people outside "Red China" to pry into texts that "a totalitarian regime" forbade its citizens to read'. See Sheldon H. Lu, 'Popular Culture and Body Politics: Beauty Writers in Contemporary China', *Modern Language Quarterly* 69.1 (2008), 167-185 (p. 168).

⁹⁷ See the the first section of Chapter I for a brief account of the impact of the 'marketization' on the Chinese translations of Proust. See also Zhang, *Monde*, pp. 133-156. Zhang's section includes many other Chinese writers' sweeping comments on and references to Proust.

reading Proust is realistic, and even considered ‘chic’ in some circles of the so-called ‘urban hipsters’ (*dushi chaoren*, 都市潮人).⁹⁸ This is consistent with Wei’s wide range of references to Western culture in general. Western-style cafés, restaurants, bars and music venues are among the most popular settings in her stories. The frequency of her citation of a Western writer’s work is probably as high as her mention of Western alcohols (Scotch Whisky, Jack Daniels, and popular cocktails) and big fashion and perfume brands (Boss, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and D&G, to name a few), particularly in the portrayal of her characters which almost all belong to the same privileged group of urban youths unquestionably immersed in consumer culture. Wei’s characters, and to a large extent, her writings themselves, manifest a ‘carefully cultivated materialism and superficiality in tone, style, and sensibility. The reader feels a palpable flat presentism rather than historical depth’.⁹⁹

The novella ‘*Zhi jiezhi*’ (‘Paper Rings’, 纸戒指) begins with the female protagonist’s reading of an ostensibly random passage from *La Recherche*:

冬季的壁炉整夜燃着熊熊的火，木柴毕毕剥剥地响着，才灭又旺……
随手翻开一页，见到 M·普鲁斯特在漫无头绪的追忆中这样的描写。

100

The winter fireplace was burning all night, the flaming brands kept crackling, gradually going out and soon blazing up again... I thumbed through one page, and found such a description in M. Proust’s long and endless *Pursuing Memory* [the usual Chinese abbreviation for *La Recherche*].

As Zhang accurately identifies, this description of a ‘winter bedroom’ – recurrent in the novella – is a reference to Proust’s passage on the narrator’s revolving and confused

⁹⁸ Or, given Wei’s open Francophilia, she is probably acquainted with the French notion of *bobo* (for *bourgeois bohémien*). A strict application of the term to China would be, of course, anachronistic. But this social phenomenon and its basic implications are similar in both Europe and China.

⁹⁹ Sheldon H. Lu, ‘Beauty Writers’, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ Wei Hui, ‘*Zhi jiezhi*’, in *Wei Hui zuopin quanji* (*The Complete Works of Wei Hui*, 卫慧作品全集) (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2000), pp. 55-79 (p. 55).

evocations in his 'chambre d'hiver' in *Du côté de chez Swann*: '[...] le feu étant entretenu toute la nuit dans la cheminée, on dort dans un grand manteau d'air chaud et fumeux, traversé des lueurs des tisons qui se rallument [...]'.¹⁰¹

This initial context in which she reads *La Recherche* is significant as it immediately announces the protagonist's sensual love affair with a married man called Wei (唯, the same pronunciation as 'Wei' but different from the author's surname, which is written as 卫), which is to be disentangled as the story goes on: 'Wei snored lightly and regularly next to me, but I couldn't sleep at all. While I leafed through this heavy book which has a "soft and gentle" [*yinrou*] style, all sorts of worries came to mind'.¹⁰² Interestingly enough, it seems that the reason that Wei (the author) considers Proust's work to be particularly relevant to the short story is because *La Recherche* is essentially a 'feminine' book. Indeed, the word 'yinrou' is sometimes explicitly translated as 'feminine' or even 'effeminate', derived from the feminine or soft principle of *yin* in ancient Chinese philosophy.

At the end of the first section, the protagonist returned to her reading of Proust in the same bedroom late at night as she was feeling 'lonely' and 'cold':

这一夜，我又捧起了那本漫无尽头的追忆。恍惚中，我的意识随波逐流于时间之河。那个法国人回忆幼时母亲如果没在睡前给他一个吻，他所产生的种种不安、悲伤和孤独。这些纤细而丰盈的感觉栩栩如生地在我眼前突现，我触手可及。

我明白，那正是我自己的灵魂，在寂寞的城市冬夜的写照。¹⁰³

That night, I, once again, held in my hands that long and endless *Pursuing Memory*. As if in a trance, my consciousness flew in the river of time. That Frenchman recalled his childhood, if his mom hadn't given him a kiss before sleep, he'd have felt various anxieties, sadness and loneliness. These

¹⁰¹ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 7. See also Zhang, *Monde*, p. 142-143.

¹⁰² Wie, 'Zhi jie zhi', p. 55. 身边的唯发出轻匀的鼾声，我却睡意全无。翻弄着手中这本沉甸甸而格调阴柔的书，心事浩渺。

¹⁰³ Wei, 'Zhi jie zhi', p. 61.

delicate and plentiful feelings vividly appeared in front of my eyes all of a sudden, almost tangible.¹⁰⁴

I understand, that was precisely the portrayal of my own soul in the lonely winter evening of the city.

Evidently, this passage refers to the famous episode of the *drame du coucher* in *Du côté de chez Swann*. Imagery that reflects the impact of *La Recherche*'s water/river-bound Chinese title is noticeable. The imagery of water is further elaborated at the end of Section Two, where the protagonist compares herself to 'an anonymous fish' that 'swims from one city to another, floating on the surface, then discovering deep waters everywhere', and suddenly decides to 'pursue the memory of lost love and life'.¹⁰⁵

Considerable *parodical* values are revealed in Wei's insertion of Proust's *drame du coucher*.¹⁰⁶ The childhood setting of a maternal kiss is transposed into the highly eroticised context of an extra-marital affair. Meanwhile, by comparing her anxiety, sadness, and loneliness – as a result of the temporary unavailability of her lover whether on the phone or in person – to those of Proust's child protagonist, Wei effectively *infantilizes* the kind of 'unbridled' female sexuality that she deliberately flaunts throughout her writings. This is subsequently confirmed by the remark of the male lover: 'very tenderly, he kissed my dishevelled hair and said you're really a child'.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, reading Proust is often accompanied by a series of struggles with getting a first book or composition published. Literary vocation is a central theme in many of Wei's stories, which signals a very different thematic engagement with Proust from that of Wang

¹⁰⁴ 'Feelings appearing in front of one's eyes' sounds very awkward in the Chinese original too.

¹⁰⁵ Wei, 'Zhi jiezhi', p. 68. 我就像是一条不知名的鱼，从一个城市游到另一个城市。浮出浮华的水面，却发现到处是深邃的水，[...] 陡然追忆远去的爱情和生命。

¹⁰⁶ This observation is inspired by Bouillaguet's discussion of Proust's parodies. See Annick Bouillaguet, *L'Écriture imitative: Pastiche, Parodie, Collage* (Paris: Nathan, 1996), pp. 86-88.

¹⁰⁷ Wei, 'Zhi jiezhi', p. 74. 他温柔无比地吻我的散发，说你真是孩子。

and Yu. Towards the end of Section Three, the protagonist mentions again Proust and his work:

我把 M·普鲁斯特的追忆暂搁一边，这三本优柔细腻的书总在折磨我脆弱的神经，令我长久地失眠，在童年、流水、音乐等富有透明质感的回忆中深深沉溺。¹⁰⁸

I temporarily put aside M. Proust's *Pursuing Memory*, the three leisurely [*yourou*] and refined volumes were constantly putting a strain on my fragile nerves, making me insomniac for long, making me excessively indulge in the memories of childhood, flowing water, music, and so on, which displayed a transparent quality.

The word 'yourou' can also be understood as 'weak in character' and hence unable to make important decisions (as in the extended collocation, *yourou guaduan*, 优柔寡断). This latter meaning quite suitably conveys the protagonist's irresolution about her love affair at this stage. Incidentally, the mention of 'three' instead of 'seven' volumes also reveals a much later edition of the Chinese integral translation of *La Recherche*,¹⁰⁹ which indicates Wei's slightly belated discovery of Proust compared to Wang and Yu.

It is at this point that the protagonist decides to write a novel:

我也回忆与唯曾有的爱情。[...] 流行歌曲的词作者说为欲望去猎求艳遇为生命去等候爱情，可欲望和生命难舍难分，扑朔迷离，具有哲学的晦涩意味。我再一次想到写作。¹¹⁰

I still thought back to the love we had had between Wei and me. [...] The pop song lyricist [Wei] said: 'hunt for affairs out of desire and wait for love for life'. But desire and life are inseparable, complicated, and confusing, with obscure philosophical meanings. Once again, I thought of writing.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 75.

¹⁰⁹ As mentioned both in the Introduction and Chapter I, the first Chinese translation of *La Recherche* was published in full in 1991 in seven volumes. Wei's reference to the three-volume edition was published by the same publisher Yilin later in 1994 (Masai'er Pulusite, *Zhuiyi sishui nianhua*, 3 vols (Nanjing: Yilin chubanshe, 1994)). Subsequently, there have been several new editions following the same three-volume format. The edition used in this thesis was published in 2008.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, Wei's engagement with literary vocation remains very shallow and lacks sincerity. The figure of the writer has undergone fundamental changes in Wei's hands, it has become, in Lu's sharp words, 'a capitalist consumer, a drug addict, a promiscuous lover'. Lu continues: 'the writer has been transformed from an intellectual, the conscience of society, the architect of the soul, to a celebrity in a consumer economy at best, a self-styled outsider at worst'.¹¹¹

Rather like Wang's use of reference to 'time'/'years' – Proust's 'longtemps' and 'les années'/'dans le Temps' – at the beginning and the end of the novella, Wei returns to Proust's prologue at the end of the short story, and her emphasis is now on the passing of time and the advent of another winter:

斗转星移，时光飞逝。又一个冬季来临的时候，木柴在 M • 普鲁斯特的火炉里永远不灭地燃烧着。烟雾中，爱人的面容依稀如影，画面至此逐渐淡出。

我知道你这会儿已觉察出故事其实是个平淡老套的故事。¹¹²

Stars changing their positions constantly, time flying by quickly, as another winter was approaching, the brands kept burning for ever in M. Proust's fireplace. The lover's complexion was turning into a shadow in the smoke, and this image was gradually fading away.

I know that you've now realized that the story is just a banal and clichéd story.

Thus, in Zhang's words, the narrative can be seen as structured around 'les événements déployés entre deux hivers ressuscitant des souvenirs ravivés par le feu proustien'.¹¹³ But on the issue of literary vocation, the reference to Proust in this context is rather ambiguous. For one thing, Proust inspires the protagonist to write. For another, the Proustian conception of art which reveals the essence of life – *la vraie vie* – has completely evaded Wei. In the end, the finitude of the protagonist's literary pursuit appears to resemble the

¹¹¹ Sheldon H. Lu, 'Beauty Writers', p. 178.

¹¹² Wei, 'Zhi Jiezhì', p. 79.

¹¹³ Zhang, *Monde*, p. 138.

ultimately short-lived love affair. It seems that the power of literary creation to redeem life and to preserve the essence of life has vanished into thin air like the lover's fading image in the smoke, and such a conception of writing is no longer desirable, or indeed, possible, in the generation and the social milieu that Wei describes and represents. As Zhang conclusively comments:

L'art comme essence de la vie l'incite à opposer un refus net à la fois à l'amateurisme et au métier, et à hisser la littérature sur un piédestal sacré, qui implique talent, sacrifice et travail. En dépit de cette prise de conscience, l'heure ne semble pas encore à la révélation. En s'attachant au plaisir, à la mode et à l'argent, la narratrice reste lucide sur la fragilité de son choix littéraire, et ce, jusqu'à la fin lorsqu'elle affirme n'avoir écrit 'qu'une histoire banale'.¹¹⁴

The theme of literary vocation is further explored in Wei's novella '*Yuwang shouqiang*' ('The Pistol of Desire', 欲望手枪).¹¹⁵ It is announced right from the incipit: 'even before Mini had wanted to become a writer, she was already enthusiastically working out a list of titles as well as about thirty interesting pen names during her Chinese class'.¹¹⁶ The author puts an explicit emphasis on the role of memory in novel writing: 'in the period leading to the writing of this novella, Mini felt she was living in a restless state of remembrance. [...] She searched in her memory for the shadows of her ambitious adolescence, including that list of work titles'.¹¹⁷ Some of her metaphors of memory are once again reminiscent of the Chinese title of *La Recherche*: 'as she was looking at it [the dark river], some past things came to mind, as if they had emerged from that dark river and

¹¹⁴ Zhang, *Monde*, p. 148.

¹¹⁵ Wei Hui, '*Yuwang shouqiang*', in *Wei Hui zuopin quanbian* (*The Complete Works of Wei Hui*) (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2000), pp. 315-390.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 315. 在米妮还没有想到要当个作家的時候，她已經在語文課上興致勃勃地為自己羅列一連串作品的名稱，以及近三十個有趣的筆名。

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* 在寫這個小說前的一段時間內，米妮覺得自己正處於一個無休止的會議狀態。[...] 她在記憶中搜索從前青春年少野心勃勃時的影子。

were gradually floating towards her'.¹¹⁸ The protagonist did not grow up in a happy family. Her parents were divorced when she was small. Thereafter, the mother moved to a different city, leaving Mini alone to face her alcoholic father and elder brother and witness their abuse of other women. *La Recherche* is the book that the female protagonist was reading while sitting next to her dying father in hospital. Terrified by the dead silence, she seems to read Proust for spiritual consolation: 'she sat in the ward, with a certain *Pursuing the Memory of Time/Years as Water/River* on her knees, feeling that silence which was sharper than a niddle'.¹¹⁹ It is worth reminding ourselves of the obituary connotation of the expression 'to pursue memory' in *La Recherche*'s Chinese title, as this could explain why Wei would consider it to be a poignant reference in this context. Contrary to the reference in '*Zhi jiezhi*', *La Recherche*'s title is cited in full but Proust's name is not mentioned. The Chinese title is clearly 'semantically relevant' here.

In '*Yinghan bu tiaowu*' ('Tough Guys Don't Dance', 硬汉不跳舞),¹²⁰ reading Proust is an activity intriguingly attributed to a character called EP, who is the lead guitarist of a rock band. EP is frequently characterized as 'the boy who loved M. Proust's *Pursuing the Memory of Time as Water*'.¹²¹ Reading Proust makes him feel fulfilled, brings out his poetic sensibility, and eventually inspires him to become a writer of – interestingly – essays rather than novels:

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 326. 她看着看着，就想起了一些往事，仿佛往事徐徐地，从那条肮脏的黑河中，漂浮而来。

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 386. 她坐在病房里，膝盖上摊着一本《追忆似水年华》，感受着比一枚针见还要尖锐的寂静。

¹²⁰ Wei Hui, '*Yinghan bu tiaowu*', in *Wei Hui zuopin quanbian* (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2000): pp. 631-670. The title's English form is explicitly mentioned in the novella (despite a little spelling error – 'guy' instead of 'guys'), it is supposed to be 'the best song that Miqi [the male protagonist] had written' (p. 646). It is unclear whether it bears any substantial relation to Norman Mailer's novel and film of the same name.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p. 644. [...] 男孩子，喜爱 M·普鲁斯特的《追忆似水年华》

EP 已利用休息间隙开始写作，写的不是小说，（小说在当今已沦落至自慰或卖俏的手段），EP 埋头写的是一篇篇关于希腊艺术起源或印度宗教探微的论文，那些论文可能永远不会发表，可 EP 不在乎，他只听从内心召唤，按最朴素的意愿行事。¹²²

EP already made use of his breaks and started writing. What he wrote was not a novel (these days, novels have been degraded to an instrument for self-consolation or coquetry), EP buried himself in the writing of a series of essays on the origin of Greek art or the discovery of Indian religions. Those essay would probably never be published, but EP didn't mind, he listened to his inner calling only, acting according to his most basic will.

Unlike the previous female protagonist readers' attribution of stereotypically 'feminine' qualities – sensuality, emotions, and irrationality – to Proust, the male reader in this novella demonstrates a certain no less stereotypical 'masculine' take on Proust: uncompromisingness, self-determination, and solitary existence. This latter view reminds us – however faintly – of the precarious circumstances under which Proust continued to compose the last few volumes despite his terminal illness. Luo's Chinese preface certainly emphasizes (and perhaps overstates) Proust's self-imprisonment and self-willed hermitism for writing.¹²³ The *unconcern* over publication also gently reminds us, not without a sense of irony, of Proust's desperate attempt to find a publisher for *Du côté de chez Swann* after successive rejections and devastating reports from Fasquelle, *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and Ollendorff.¹²⁴

As a woman writer of fiction, Wei in this passage seems to have taken on board some of the criticisms of her works, i.e. novels in her hands 'have been degraded to an

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 665.

¹²³ Luo describes Proust as 'someone who willingly buries himself alive in the grave [...] emotionally noting down memories of all sorts of experiences and feelings he lived through in his previous life' (一个自愿活埋在坟墓中的人 [...] 回想生前种种经历与感受的抒情记录). Luo, 'Critical Introduction', p. 22.

¹²⁴ Bernard Grasset finally accepted to publish Proust's manuscript at the author's own expense. For a brief summary of the publication trajectory of *Du côté de chez Swann*, see Marion Schmid, 'The Birth and Development of *A la recherche*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. by Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 58-73 (pp. 65-66).

instrument for self-consolation or coquetry'. The word 'self-consolation' (*ziwei*, 自慰) is more commonly understood as an 'onanistic activity' especially for women, which strongly echoes Wei's (or her protagonist's) view on the function of novel writing expressed elsewhere, for example, in '*Zhi jiezhi*': '[I could] try novel writing, perhaps [one could] thus retreat into one's personal secret language, touching on something intrinsic while immersed in a certain self-fulfilling enthusiasm'.¹²⁵ Wei clearly thinks that there is a 'gender divide' in the choice of literary genre. She self-consciously makes a distinction between the kind of blatantly consumer-oriented 'erotic chick lit' writers largely represented by herself and the more traditional writer-intellectual model that embodies 'the conscience of society' and 'the architect of the soul' mostly written by men. At any rate, the fact that various perceptions of Proust's work can be appropriated to enhance Wei's gender-specific characterizations indirectly reflects the 'androgynous qualities' of Proust's writing.¹²⁶

The rock music scene, in Wei's fictional representation, undoubtedly embodies social and cultural rebellions, and it consists of drug addicts and libertines. Rock music is the signature passion for real 'cool guys'. However, the lead guitarist EP is differently characterized, and reading Proust is certainly one of his most noticeable characteristics. After the disappearance of the lead singer and song writer protagonist, a heroin addict, the group is disbanded and EP turns to writing. It seems that Proust is somehow responsible for EP's 'conversion' from the cult of urban rebellious noise to the quiet literary quest for the inner calling. Finally, the rather unusual association between Proust and the lead guitarist of a rock band could perhaps be understood in the same context of postmodern consumer culture. It must be pointed out that the rock music scene was very new to the Chinese

¹²⁵ Wei, '*Zhi jiezhi*', p. 75. 尝试写小说这种叙述方式, 也许可以遁入个人的隐秘语词, 在某种自足的激情中触及实质。

¹²⁶ Sections I.8 and I.9 of Chapter I specifically engage with Proust's discourses on gender and sexuality.

public in the 1990's. One characteristic that is shared by both rock music and Proust is their newness and relative marginality in the 'depolticized culture of urban consumption that has arisen in China in the wake of 1989',¹²⁷ not so different in essence from other commercial brands and products which feature so prominently in Wei's tales.

Clearly, there is a tendency to 'consume' or 'kitchify' Proust in such intertextual practices, whereby Proust's canonical work is reduced to an almost empty signifier, disconnected from its original signified.¹²⁸ Kitchification is a well-established, paradoxical postmodern phenomenon in the West.¹²⁹ Its manifestation in the context of contemporary Chinese literature indicates, albeit rather negatively, China's growing – not only economic but also cultural – integration into the global system since its 'Reform and Opening up'. As Lu sharply observes, the works of what he calls 'beauty writers' like Wei 'signal a shift from the paradigm of national literature to the necessity of globalization. Historical depth is absent, and only a glistening surface remains'.¹³⁰ In many ways, this paradigmatic shift has been well reflected in our study of the three writers of successive generations in post-Mao China. While Wang's and Yu's intertextual engagements with Proust are still thematically grounded in the 'national trauma' of China's recent history, the kind of urban literature represented by Wei can be said to 'partake of a transnational network of postmodern consumer culture', in which 'Chinese history matters less' and 'what matters is the instantaneous surface feeling of a street wanderer, shopper, consumer, and lover in a

¹²⁷ Andrew Field and Jeroen Gronewegen, 'Explosive Acts: Beijing's Punk Rock Scene in the Postmodern World of 2007', in *Postmodern China*, ed. by Jens Damm and Andreas Steen (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), pp. 8-26 (p. 24). For a detailed account of the marginality of Chinese rock music, compared to the hegemonic *tongsu* music (officially approved popular music), in the early 1990's, see Andrew F. Jones, *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 91-114.

¹²⁸ Cf. Gray, *Postmodern Proust*, p. 166.

¹²⁹ See Antoine Compagnon, *Les Cinq paradoxes de la modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p. 171.

¹³⁰ Lu, 'Beauty Writers', p. 178.

metropolis'.¹³¹ In stark contrast to Wei is the Franco-Chinese author François Cheng, whose novel *Le Dit de Tianyi* is to be extensively examined in Part II. Equally written in the late 1990's, Cheng's works also answers the 'necessity of globalization', but with a fundamental intention to put divergent cultural traditions in constructive dialogue.

II.5. Conclusion

As explained in the first section of Chapter I, Proust was translated in China largely against the backdrop of an emerging Chinese Modernism or 'residue modernism' primarily channelled through translation, and the general intellectual energy of the 1980's wrestled with a 'right' balance between Western cultural influence and Chinese cultural heritage. Proust's *La Recherche* was translated and received as a high Modernist work in China in the 1980's and 1990's, a period in which Chinese society exponentially developed from modernity to postmodernity. The 'abnormal' intensity of such a socio-economic development was unparalleled in the West. Our intertextual examples in many ways refract the 'social anomalies and ideological contradictions' marking Chinese postmodernity.¹³²

Overall, the mainland Chinese creative reception of Proust seems to offer limited understandings of Proust's work *per se*. Proust appears almost exclusively in the novellas – rather than long novels – of writers who were still experimenting with modernist styles and techniques, in a society which was exponentially evolving into postmodernity. None of the discussed works can be said to be most representative of each author's ultimate literary vision, and the popularity of these texts – perhaps with the exception of Yu's *Cris* – is relatively small compared to some of their later works. None of them demonstrates any particular effort to conceptually engage with or challenge the length and thematic scope of

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 178.

¹³² See Footnote 18 of Chapter I.

La Recherche, something which is also said to be conditioned by the reality of contemporary mainland Chinese literary production – another key difference with Cheng's approach to Proust.¹³³ The historian Julia Lovell in her journalistic article provocatively concludes:

China today is not the kind of place that encourages the professional dedication to literary craft essential to successful long fiction. Writers rarely revise; editors barely edit; they are too busy blogging, filmmaking, or chasing after the next big literary trend. The short story is the ideal literary form for a country suffering so acutely from attention deficit disorder: long enough to capture a meaningful fragment of this confounding country; (usually) brief enough to prevent authors reaching for melodramatic plot hinges or slack description.¹³⁴

However, making references to Western canonical works such as *La Recherche* is certainly a way to increase the cultural prestige of these mainland Chinese writers' own works, creating a horizon of expectation and a favourable climate of reception. It does help promote scholarly as well as creative interest in Proust in China and abroad to some extent. The cross-cultural referencing – highly common in contemporary Chinese literature – implicitly expresses China's impatient cultural ambition for contemporary Chinese literature to be integrated into the world literature network.

As always, ambiguities permeate such global cultural integration. For many contemporary Chinese writers to be integrated – even just superficially or purely out of commercial interests – is to be successful. As Lovell remarks: 'the possession of an "international" (in reality, a Western or Anglophone) profile through translation was essential to making a literary reputation in China'.¹³⁵ Citing and invoking the world and especially the Western canon are the basic strategies many mainland Chinese writers adopt

¹³³ Cheng openly speaks of a *démarche proustienne*. See Part II.

¹³⁴ Lovell, 'Key to China', (last paragraph).

¹³⁵ Julia Lovell, 'Finding a Place: Mainland Chinese Fiction in the 2000's', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71 (2012), 7-32 (p. 15).

in order for their writings to be potentially accepted and assimilated in the West, which, if successful, is bound to guarantee their literary fame back in China. Despite their distinctive aesthetic as well as marketing concerns, this is equally true for the group of Franco-Chinese authors such as the French Academician François Cheng, the French *Prix Femina* winner (other than Cheng) DAI Sijie, and the Nobel Prize laureate GAO Xingjian. They were practically unknown in China before prestigious Western institutions officially recognized their artistic and intellectual merits.¹³⁶

This integration is of mutual interest. From France's perspective, recognizing and promoting artists and writers from the world's emerging economic powers such as China, India, and Brazil is an important component of French cultural diplomacy in the twentieth and even more so in the twenty-first century.¹³⁷ French cultural authorities are very much conscious of the cosmopolitan vocation of French literature in the national and international literary scenes, especially facing the challenge from the Anglophone world.¹³⁸ One of the major scholarly events in 2013 in Paris to commemorate the centenary of the first publication of Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann*, co-organized by the Collège de France and the Ecole normale supérieure, entitled "'Du côté de chez Swann", ou le cosmopolitisme d'un roman français', prominently featured themes like Orientalism and transnational aesthetics. Western scholars palpably express a desire to expand the field of Proust studies by reaching beyond their Western context.

¹³⁶ However, this impression has started to change, most notably with the Nobel Prize for Literature recently awarded to MO Yan in 2012, who was already a very well-established writer in China before this weighty Western honour. Like Yu, Mo was also a core member of the Chinese avant-garde literature movement in the 1980's.

¹³⁷ See Philippe Lane, *French Scientific and Cultural Diplomacy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 54–55.

¹³⁸ Ileana Daniela Chirila, 'La Littérature transculturelle franco-chinoise ou comment réinventer la République des Lettres', in *Traits chinois / lignes francophones*, edited by Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude (Montréal: Presse de l'Université de Montréal, 2012), pp. 67–83 (p. 68).

Building on our previous observations in Chapter I, this chapter will end with a few theoretical observations on the *effects* produced by the Chinese linguistic translation and, to some extent, ‘cultural translation’ – or as some would rather say ‘distortions’ or ‘misappropriations’ – of *La Recherche*. As aforementioned, Proust was translated in a social and intellectual environment marked by a dynamic tension between an opening up to the West and a rediscovery of Chinese cultural heritage. This tension is well reflected in and also supported by an influential Chinese school of literary translation theory which sees translation as fundamentally a ‘competition’ between two languages and cultures, rather than insisting on an ‘authentic’ understanding of the absolute Other. The emphasis is on the harmonious ‘communicability’ between cultures through languages.¹³⁹ It is the translator’s task and responsibility to strive for such ‘harmony’,¹⁴⁰ especially when the forward-looking initiative from cultural ‘competition’ could potentially be brought into a cultural ‘conflict’ that hinders cross-cultural dialogues. This approach to literary translation in many ways problematizes the established models of foreignization/domestication and self/other dichotomies in Western translation discourses elaborated by such notable figures as Lawrence Venuti. Incidentally, it is worth pointing out that the scholar Xu Yuanchong, who most notably advances this particular Chinese literary translation theory, was himself involved in the *First Translation* and co-translated the two volumes of *Le Côté de Guermantes*. According to our previous observations in Chapter I, Zhou’s new translation would seem closer to this theory in its approach than Xu’s, and the former has proved to be

¹³⁹ Xu Yuanchong, ‘Fanyi’, p. 107. I already made references to Xu’s translation theory when discussing Zhou’s translation strategy, see I.5.

¹⁴⁰ As discussed in relation to Yu’s preface, the idea of ‘harmony’ has a long historical trajectory in Chinese thought, especially in Daoism and Confucianism, and it carries strong political overtones in contemporary China. However, it is far beyond the scope of this study to investigate its possible influence on this particular Chinese school of translation theory.

more popular with established writers such as Chen Cun and WANG Anyi.¹⁴¹ Judging by their respective creative engagements with Proust, this particular view of translation would appeal to the three writers of the present corpus too. Wang, Yu, and Wei variably recycle some of the Proustian clichés to make them appear in the new lights of classical Chinese thought (Wang), contemporary cross-cultural politics (Yu), and the modern Chinese urban landscape (Wei). While the water/river image of time in relation to Proust has started to become a cliché in the reception of *La Recherche* in China, such an aesthetic conception could potentially inspire Western Proust scholars in return, especially when they reexamine passages like the river landscape of the Vivonne, where the narrator associates the river source with aristocratic family ancestries ‘venus peut-être il y a bien des siècles d’Asie mais apatriés pour toujours [...] gardant encore [...] un poétique éclat d’orient’.¹⁴²

The three mainland Chinese writers’ intertextual practice legitimately constitutes and consolidates Proust’s literary posterity in China. But it is a retrospective relationship in which the father resembles more and more his son(s) rather than *vice versa*, as recapitulated by Harold Bloom.¹⁴³ Just as Madame de Sévigné is Proust’s creation, Proust, too, can be described as these Chinese writers’ creation(s) especially for their Chinese readership. Intertextuality can thus be read *backwards* and the posterior texts reveal an additional meaning to the one that precedes them.¹⁴⁴ This is exactly what happens to the Chinese translation and reception of *La Recherche*. Translators of *La Recherche* first (mis)led Chinese writers to create a Proust who can ‘speak to’ Chinese aesthetic and philosophical

¹⁴¹ See Zhou Keyi, ‘Chen Cun’; Wang Anyi openly recommends Chinese readers to choose Zhou’s translation. Her recommendation is printed on the cover of a different edition of Zhou’s translation of *À l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, published by People’s Literature Publishing House.

¹⁴² Proust, *RTP I*, pp. 165-166.

¹⁴³ See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁴⁴ Bouillaguet, *Jeu intertextuel*, p. 213.

traditions. Readers of popular Chinese writers would thus anticipate a ‘sinicized’ version of Proust before they approach Proust’s actual work. As we will see in Part II on the Franco-Chinese author Cheng, Proust’s sinicized posterity will continue to voyage across the waters from China back to France.

In a recent article on Roland Petit’s ballet adaptation of Proust’s *La Recherche*, Marion Schmid stretches the linguistic translation theory to an inter-medial context, exploring how the choreographer’s ‘free’ rendition of *La Recherche* actually ‘converges with Proust’s own theory of translation as essentially a new form of creation’, in tune with Proust’s poetics ‘based on principles of *analogy*’.¹⁴⁵ Citing Antoine Berman’s *Épreuve de l’étranger*, Schmid further explains that such a relationship between original and translation should be seen in terms of ‘reconfiguration and revelation’, thus acknowledging translation’s ‘capacity to make visible aspects of the source text that may have been hidden in the original’.¹⁴⁶ Advisedly, in the next part on Proust and Cheng, I will transpose Schmid’s conception of adaptation informed by translation theory to our inter-/intralingual and cross-cultural context, where notions of ‘analogy’ or ‘parallel’, ‘reconfiguration’ and ‘revelation’ prevail.

¹⁴⁵ Schmid, ‘Ballet’, p. 185; p. 187. My italics.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 197. See also Antoine Berman, *L’Épreuve de l’étranger: culture et traduction dans l’Allemagne romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 20.

Part II
Proust in the Chinese Diaspora: François Cheng's *Le Dit de Tianyi*

I.1. Introduction

If citing Proust, for the mainland Chinese writers, enhances the cultural prestige of their own works in China, for the Franco-Chinese writers, it signals an imperative assimilation of their 'sinity' into the French culture. Among this latter group of writers (including Gao Xingjian and Dai Sijie), François Cheng's engagement with Proust stands out as the most thorough.¹ The importance of Proust's work as an intellectual and artistic model for Cheng, especially in relation to his novel, *Le Dit de Tianyi* (1998), is crystalized in the author's own words: 'ma démarche, sans prétention de ma part, est très proche de celle de Proust: avec cette langue, j'ai pu repenser ma vie, et repenser ma pensée, autrement que si j'étais resté en Chine'.² 'Cette langue', of course, refers to the French language. This 'rethought life' is what Cheng frequently refers to elsewhere as 'une nouvelle vie'.³ As we will see, the idea of a new language creating a new life is crucial to our understanding of Cheng's translingual literary aesthetics.

Cheng's intellectual development mirrors that of Tianyi in *Le Dit*: predominantly Daoist in his way of thinking (which, in the Chinese context, is never entirely separable from Buddhist and Confucian thought); very well-acquainted with both Eastern and Western literary and artistic traditions; and aspiring to engage equally with the two worlds in order to create something harmonious, which Cheng describes as a ceaseless process of 'transcendance'.⁴

¹ Their intertextual references to Proust have been noted by Yinde Zhang, 'La Traduction de Proust dans le champ littéraire chinois', in *Littérature comparée et perspectives chinoises* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), pp. 31-49.

² Cheng, 'Double Culture', pp. 370-371.

³ See François Cheng, 'Discours de réception de François Cheng' <<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/discours-de-reception-de-francois-cheng>> [accessed 8 December 2014]; see also *Le Dialogue: Une passion pour la langue française* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002), Kindle Ebook.

⁴ Cheng mentions the idea of 'transcendance' on many occasions. For an example, see François Cheng, *Cinq méditations sur la beauté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008 [2006]), pp. 20-21.

If mainland Chinese writers' encounter with Proust's work appears to be brief, incidental, and, in many ways, 'historical',⁵ Cheng's engagement with Proust's work as well as Proust criticism can be described as long and inevitable. Proust is arguably one of the most common subjects among members of Cheng's intellectual circle. His master's dissertation (1963-68) on Chinese poetry made an impact on his examiner Roland Barthes, as well as on Julia Kristeva and Roman Jakobson. This was a time when literary theory was undergoing drastic change. From the 1970's to the 1980's, Cheng was actively involved in structuralist and post-structuralist debates, engaging in intellectual dialogue with Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Gilles Deleuze. For example, as we will see, many of Cheng's ideas of the arts share strong affinities with Deleuze's formulation of Proust's aesthetic conception in *Proust et les signes* (1976).

On the other hand, many of those structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers are known for their interest in Eastern cultures.⁶ Barthes's and Kristeva's works also contribute to a wider French discourse on Eastern cultures shared by other scholars from Asian studies such as François Julien and Anne Cheng (François Cheng's daughter). Post-structuralist discourses are particularly noticeable in Cheng's creative writings. These varied intellectual connections will help explain the somewhat 'strange' compatibility between Proust and Chinese thought in Cheng's fiction.

If there is one branch of Western philosophy with which Cheng has to associate himself, it would be phenomenology as formulated by the French school represented by

⁵ See the first section of Part I Chapter I for the translation history of Proust's works in China, which refracts the drastically changing ideological tensions within the Chinese society in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

⁶ For example, Barthes's *L'Empire des signes* (1970), *Carnet du voyage en Chine* (posthumously published in 2009), Kristeva's *Des Chinoises* (1973), and many of Lacan's references to Laozi and Chinese symbols.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Henri Maldiney. Cheng sees in phenomenology an appreciable communicability with classical Chinese thought, especially Daoism. He remarks:

Je me présente plutôt comme un phénoménologue un peu naïf qui observe et interroge non seulement les données déjà repérées et cernées par la raison, mais ce qui est recelé et impliqué, ce qui surgit de façon inattendue et inespérée, ce qui se manifeste comme don et promesse. Je n'ignore pas que dans l'ordre de la matière, on peut et on doit établir des théorèmes; je sais en revanche que, dans l'ordre de la vie, il convient d'apprendre à *saisir les phénomènes qui adviennent*, chaque fois singuliers, lorsque ceux-ci se révèlent *être dans le sens de la Voie*, c'est-à-dire d'une marche vers *la vie ouverte*. Outre mes réflexions, le travail que je dois effectuer consiste plutôt à creuser en moi *la capacité à la réceptivité*. Seule une posture d'accueil – être '*le ravin du monde*', *selon Laozi* –, et non de conquête, nous permettra, j'en suis persuadé, de recueillir, de la vie ouverte, la part du vrai.⁷

As Part II gradually unfolds, it will become clear that Cheng's interest in phenomenology and a particular trend of phenomenological approaches in Proust studies open yet another theoretical and methodological platform, on which Cheng's creative Daoist 'import' joins up with Proust critics from Jean-Pierre Richard to Nathalie Auber. The 'phenomenological affinity' between Cheng's acculturation of Daoism and the more recent approaches to Proustian philosophy will allow us to better express 'Eastern' characteristics (long felt by me and other critics like Bucknall) – albeit epistemologically uncertain – in Proust's modernist poetics.⁸

Adopting a similar approach to intertextuality as the one employed in Part I Chapter II, the following analysis will first start from a number of empirical observations on Cheng's relation to Proust. Then, largely following up Cheng's vital clue – his 'démarche

⁷ Cheng, *Beauté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008), p. 19. My italics.

⁸ Marguerite Yourcenr, for example, describes *La Recherche* as an 'œuvre si bouddhiste, par la constatation du passage [du temps], par l'émiettement de toute personnalité extérieure, par la notion du néant et du désir'. Cited in Hokenson, *East-West Aesthetics*, p. 221. Similarly, Emmanuel Berl, whose Jewish family is related to Bergson and Proust, calls Proust a 'bouddhiste de l'amour'. Cited in Jean-Paul and Raphaël Enthoven, 'Amour', in *Dictionnaire amoureux de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Grasset, 2013), Kindle book.

proustienne', it will establish a representative range of conceptual and thematic parallels between *Le Dit* and *La Recherche*, exploring how Cheng's translingual literary aesthetics is effectuated in his creative take on the Western canon in juxtaposition with the Chinese canon. The final section will put Cheng's 'démarche proustienne' in relation to his broader intellectual enterprise which aims at cultural transcendence, and reflect upon a few key critical issues underlying cultural translation and transcultural writing.

I.2. 'A la recherche du temps à venir'

Despite the common enthusiasm for Proust in Cheng's intellectual circle, up until the time he started writing *Le Dit* in the late 1980's, Cheng had rarely mentioned Proust in his work. This intellectual silence about Proust could partly be explained by the fact that Cheng was until then mainly preoccupied with poetry rather than prose as he was translating Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Verlaine into Chinese, and classical Chinese poetry into French. The publication of *Le Dit* seems to have brought about a drastic change: from then on, the reference to Proust has proliferated in Cheng's writings. As we have seen in the previous section, it is clearly Cheng's intention to encourage his readers to bear Proust in mind whilst they are reading the novel. *Le Dit* as Cheng's first novel is often said to have decidedly marked his transition from sinologist to novelist, from his scholarly profession to an artistic vocation. In this light, the impact of Proust on Cheng and his novel can be seen as only more profound. Indeed, this is not the first time in the course of the present study that Proust or the reading of Proust's work has significantly contributed to a writer's intellectual and artistic transition. In Section II.3.1 of Part I, I suggested how the Chinese writer Yu Hua's encounter with Proust's work inspired his thematic – revolving around time and memory –

as well as narrative experiments with fictional writings, which decisively lead to his generic advancement from short stories to novels.

Le Dit in the French original (1998) consists of a preface ('avant-propos') and three parts, a structure which, as we shall see, is different from the book's Chinese translation (2003). The French preface is attributed to a different narrator, one of Tianyi's former fellow international students in France, who claims to have translated and reconstructed the narrative in French based on the piles of writings given by Tianyi, which would have risked being destroyed had they stayed in China: 'laissés en Chine, ils auraient toute chance d'être jetés aux ordures ou de servir de combustible'.⁹ The apparent inconsistencies and lacunae within these writings are resolved and complemented by Tianyi's verbal recount, which was noted down by the narrator with the help of a basic cassette recorder. This narrator could be seen as the first incarnation of Cheng himself in the novel especially because of the corresponding details between the narrator's life trajectory and Cheng's biography, such as the decision to settle permanently in France and a major surgery that both Cheng and the narrator underwent in the early 1990's.

While there is no evidence to suggest that this narrative device is directly influenced by Proust, it is nevertheless worth pointing out its commonality with Proust's earlier unfinished work, *Jean Santeuil*, in the preface of which the narrator claims to have transposed the manuscript of the writer C. with whom the narrator and his friend communicated on a regular basis while staying at a health resort. Just like Proust's narrator who decided to publish 'les papiers qu'on avait trouvés chez lui [the writer C.] du roman dont nous avons une copie'¹⁰ after the announcement of C's death, Cheng's narrator, after

⁹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Marcel Proust, *Jean Santeuil* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 57.

Tianyi's death, 'entrepri[t] alors la rude tâche de reconstituer le récit dont [il avait] la charge [...] Avant que tout ne soit perdu'.¹¹

The three parts of the novel include: 'Épopée du départ', which is set in China, spanning the period from 1925 to 1945; 'Récit d'un détour', set in Europe, especially France, between 1948 and 1957; and finally 'Mythe du retour', leading up to the end of the 1970's. The first two parts are extensively biographical, made up of Cheng's own life experience in China and Europe, whereas the 'myth of return' is based on the author's imaginative reconstruction of certain catastrophic historical events such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), the Three Years of Natural Disaster (1958-1961), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Tianyi's fear that his writings may be destroyed in China concerns the content of Part Three, where Tianyi denounces many of the severe mismanagements of the Chinese Communist Party and its leader. Although 'Tianyi's writings' – Cheng's novel – have 'survived', been 'translated' back into Chinese, and even attained considerable fame in the Sinophone world, the publication has not circumvented censorship in mainland China.¹²

Cheng explicitly foregrounds his intertextual dialogue with Proust in a pivotal passage that links 'Épopée du départ' with 'Récit d'un détour'. The protagonist Tianyi listens to the Chinese professor F. – another incarnation of Cheng himself – explicate the Daoist conceptions of time, void (*le Vide*), and transformation (*le Change*) on the Yangzi River, just before leaving China for France. Tianyi later in retrospect makes the following remark:

Je m'inclinai avec gratitude devant son explication en bien des points obscurs pour moi. Je retins au moins qu'elle affirmait que rien de la vraie

¹¹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 11.

¹² However, the Taiwanese edition of the Chinese translation of *Le Dit* remains uncensored. An example of censored material can be found in Part III Chapter XVI of the novel, where Cheng explicitly comments on the severe mismanagement of the Chinese Communist Party that led to the Three Years of Natural Disaster.

vie ne se perd et que ce qui ne se perd pas débouche sur un futur aussi continu qu'inconnu. Explication dont je me souviendrai lorsque en France il me sera donné de lire *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Contrairement à Proust, j'aurais écrit 'A la recherche du temps à venir'. La loi du temps, du moins ma loi à moi, à travers ce que je venais de vivre avec l'Amante, n'était pas dans l'accompli, dans l'achevé, mais dans le différé, l'inachevé. Il me fallait passer par le Vide et par le Change.¹³

This highly condensed passage in many ways self-referentially announces the novel we are reading as Tianyi's *livre à venir*. Cheng evidently attempts to re-examine Proust's sense of time from a Daoist point of view, creatively introducing a critical as well as geographical reorientation of Proust's text. This critical relation, especially in the form of 'commentary', between Cheng's and Proust's texts is what Genette conceives of as *metatextuality* in addition to their obvious intertextual nature.¹⁴

The setting of this scene itself is an allusion to a recurrent motif in the founding classical texts of Daoism and Confucianism. Water/river, which share the same character in classical Chinese 水, as the professor F. explains, is the 'symbole du temps'¹⁵ and is essentially cyclical. In classical Chinese thought, the perception of the water/river movement sometimes *is* the definition of 'time' (which is of course different from our modern understanding of it).¹⁶ *The Analects*, again, describes Confucius, standing *by* the river – rather than *on* the river – saying: 'what passes away is, perhaps, like this. Day and night it never lets up'.¹⁷ Let us remind ourselves of the iconic Chinese translation of the title of *La Recherche* as 'pursuing the memory of time/years as water/river'. Against this

¹³ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 191.

¹⁴ Genette defines 'métatextualité' as 'la relation, on dit plus couramment de 'commentaire', qui unit un texte à un autre texte dont il parle, sans nécessairement le citer (le convoquer), voire, à la limite, sans le nommer [...] C'est, par excellence, la relation critique'. See Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 190.

¹⁶ As cited before in Section II.2 of Part I Chapter II, a discussion of the problems of talking about 'time' in ancient Chinese thought, can be found in Allan, *Water*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁷ *The Analects*, IX.17.

backdrop, Cheng's inter- and metatextual introduction of Proust in the above-cited passage appears to be particularly valid in the Chinese context and provokes an intriguing compatibility between classical Chinese thought and Proustian philosophy. Even the alternative, more literal, but less well-known rendition of the title by Zhou Kexi as 追寻逝去的时光 ('in search of lost time') does not escape the water/river reference in the Chinese context. Sarah Allan acutely points out that the verb *shi* ('passing away', 逝) is etymologically linked to the flowing and passing by of water, as is still seen in the expression *shishui* ('passing away of water', 逝水).¹⁸

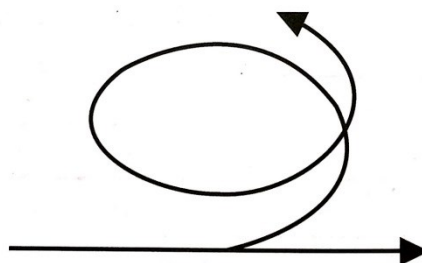
It is worth pointing out that Cheng had actually first intended to employ 'du bord du fleuve' – literally 'by the river' – as the title of his novel. The first title was rejected by Cheng's editor due to its dearth of literary resonance for French readers. In comparison, the title for the English translation, 'The River Below', makes a conscious effort to return to Cheng's initial intention and further highlights the importance of the passage in question, although 'the river below' is not exactly the same as 'by the river'. Whereas the English translator Julia Shirek Smith's titular proposal seems to be based on the above-cited pivotal passage alone, Cheng, apart from the Confucian allusion, probably has Tianyi's various experiences with other rivers in mind, where the subject's position is not always *on* the river.

In our discussion of the intertextual relation between Wang Xiaobo's novella, '*Fleeting Years as Water*' (似水流年), and Proust's work in Part I Chapter II, we already noted that Wang describes the experience of time as 'a possessed person lying on the riverbed' – rather than *on* the river, like the professor F. and Tianyi's position, or like Confucius's, *by* the river – 'observing dead leaves, driftwood, and empty bottles, flowing by

¹⁸ Allan, *Water*, pp. 36-7.

and being carried away by running water’.¹⁹ I suggested that Wang’s nuanced version of the time-as-water/river allusion accommodates well Proust’s formulation of an existential condition as ‘dans le Temps’ (the ending phrase of *La Recherche*). In comparison, Cheng’s Daoist positioning of time, which, in fact, often hints at a kind of *extratemporality* – on or above the river – curiously merges with Proust’s metaphysical pursuit of truth ‘en dehors du Temps’²⁰ which is, in Deleuze’s words, ‘situé dans une complication primordiale, éternité véritable, temps originel absolu’ and is found in art.²¹

Cheng’s conception of ‘temps à venir’ is critically informed by his reading of the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*, 易经), also known as *I Ching* and *Le Livre des Mutations* in French, a fundamental classic text which significantly predates and exercises a huge influence on both Daoist and Confucian scriptures. In *Vide et plein: Le langage pictural chinois*, Cheng explains that whereas *le Vide (originel)* corresponds to the ‘mutation non changeante’, i.e. the primordial and original ontological state of all things to which we constantly return, *le Change* refers to both the regular movement of the Cosmos, the ‘mutation simple’, and the evolution of particular beings, the ‘mutation changeante’. Furthermore, ‘dans l’existence d’un être particulier, le Temps suit un double mouvement: linéaire (dans le sens de la « mutation changeante ») et circulaire (vers le sens de la « mutation non changeante ») qu’on peut figurer ainsi :²²



¹⁹ See Section II.2 of Part I.

²⁰ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 510.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976), p. 60.

²² François Cheng, *Vide et plein: le langage pictural chinois* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 68.

As the professor F. teaches Tianyi on the boat, 'le temps procéderait donc par cercles concentriques, ou par cercles tournant en spirale si vous voulez'.²³ The threefold movement of 'time' finds its perfect expression in the water/river metaphor: ongoing, discontinuous, and cyclical. The professor further clarifies:

ce cercle n'est pas la roue qui tourne sur elle-même, sur les choses du même ordre selon la pensée indienne, ni ce qu'on appelle l'éternel retour. Le nuage condensé en pluie n'est plus l'eau du fleuve, et la pluie ne retombe pas sur la même eau. Car le cercle ne se fait qu'en passant par le Vide et par le Change. Oui, l'idée de la mutation et de la transformation est essentielle dans la pensée chinoise. Elle est la loi même de la Voie.²⁴

'La Voie' is the most commonly accepted French translation of the Chinese word 'Dao' ('the Way'). But 'Dao' also means 'dire' or 'to say', which immediately echoes the title of the novel. Hence, 'le dit de Tianyi' should also be understood as 'le *Dao* de Tianyi'. 'Le dit' in French in this particular substantive form refers to a kind of literary narrative that can be dated back to the Middle Ages.²⁵

Although Tianyi ostensibly endeavours to achieve something in opposition to Proust's project ('contrairement à Proust'), most Proust scholars would agree that Proust's 'temps perdu' is never literally 'lost' in the past, and the Proustian sense of time, just like the book the protagonist begins to write at the end of *La Recherche*, revolves around the idea of coming – Cheng's 'le temps à venir'. Deleuze, for example, repeatedly stresses that 'l'œuvre de Proust n'est pas tournée vers le passé et les découvertes de la mémoire, mais vers le futur et les progrès de l'apprentissage'.²⁶ Both the Daoist and the Proustian

²³ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 191.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Le Petit Robert* defines 'le dit' as follows: 'au Moyen Âge, Genre littéraire, petite pièce traitant d'un sujet familier ou d'actualité. « *Le dit de l'Herberie* », de Rutebeuf.

²⁶ Deleuze, *Proust*, p. 36. Given the close intellectual communication between Cheng and Deleuze, it is perhaps not surprising to notice the affinity between the two writers' readings of Proust. As will be explored later, not only does Cheng's formulation of 'mutation non

conceptions of 'time' emphasize the interaction among the continuity, spontaneous disruption, and return of time (and space), as it says in the cited passage, 'rien de la vraie vie ne se perd et que ce qui ne se perd pas débouche sur un futur aussi continu qu'inconnu'.²⁷ These ideas are reflected in the basic tripartite design of *La Recherche* as *le temps perdu*, *recherché*, and *retrouvé*. The novel ends with 'dans le Temps' and begins with 'longtemps', with its first volume ending also with a temporal reference, 'comme les années',²⁸ which demonstrates a strong sense of continuity and cyclical return. Yet, Proust had first actually intended to name his novel 'Les Intermittences du cœur', which implies a clear disruption of our sense of time as a linear experience.

'Le différé' is recognizably Derridean and even Cheng's nuanced formulation of 'un futur aussi continu qu'inconnu' as the 'temps à venir' is strongly reminiscent of Derrida's distinction between *futur* and *avenir*:

In general, I try to distinguish between what one calls the future and "l'avenir." The future is that which – tomorrow, later, next century – will be. There's a future which is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable. But there is a future, l'avenir (to come) which refers to someone who comes whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future. That which is totally unpredictable. The Other who comes without my being able to anticipate their arrival. So if there is a real future beyond this other known future, it's *l'avenir* in that it's the coming of the Other when I am completely unable to foresee their arrival.²⁹

The exploration of 'the Other' will indeed be Tianyi's primary intellectual preoccupation once he has arrived in Europe in 'Récit d'un détour'.

In fact, far from contradicting Proust, Cheng's commentary on Proust, despite his Daoist point of departure, resonates with discourses in Proust studies. Nathalie Aubert in

changeante' strongly echoes Deleuze's classification of Proustian time as 'un temps originel absolu, véritable éternité qui s'affirme dans l'art', Cheng's 'démarche proustienne' also picks up Deleuze's idea of 'apprentissage' in *La Recherche*. Deleuze, *Proust*, p. 26.

²⁷ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 192.

²⁸ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 420.

²⁹ *Derrida*, dir. by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman (Zeitgeist Films; Jane Doe Films, 2002).

Proust: La Traduction du sensible, for instance, also concludes that Proust's *La Recherche* 'agite chaque figure du passé par une mise au présent, à la fois mise en présence et travail constant de l'attente, de l'œuvre qui reste toujours à venir'.³⁰

Thus Cheng provocatively juxtaposes the Daoist vocabulary (and context) with notable poststructuralist and poststructuralism-inflected Proustian discourses, which makes the connection between Daoism and Proust appear all the more compelling in the above-cited passage. As a result, both French readers and Chinese readers (of *Le Dit* in translation) are pushed to reflect on how those culturally specific and divergent ideas might converge, despite a sea of epistemic uncertainties – simply because we do not have enough strong evidence to pin down, especially in the scholarly fashion, the direct empirical influences between Daoism/Confucianism and the work of Western thinkers like Derrida and Deleuze. While French readers tend to be intrigued by Cheng's novel Eastern take on the rather familiar subject of Proust and aspire to culturally accommodate such an approach, which is perhaps superficially reflected in the institutional recognitions of Cheng's work in France from the *Prix Fémina* to the Académie française; Chinese readers also benefit from Cheng's creative appropriation of a rather unfamiliar and abstract foreign subject to Chinese thought. This bilateral process results in an initiation of an intercultural dialogue, in which readers from both cultures are compelled to participate, activating the knowledge of their own cultures while learning about the other. We will return to this intention and effect of initiating cross-cultural dialogues through the juxtaposition of traditions in later sections of the chapter.

³⁰ Nathalie Aubert, *Proust: La Traduction du sensible* (Oxford: Legenda, 2002), p. 134.

I.3. Proust in Paratexts

In the French edition of *Le Dit*, our cited passage offers Cheng's only explicit reference to Proust. It is the *paratexts* featuring in the Chinese translation that unequivocally reveal Cheng's ambition to approximate Proust, for a variety of reasons.

Although Cheng did not translate *Le Dit* into Chinese himself, he did write an additional preface for the benefit of his Chinese readership. This new preface no longer has a fictional narrator and the author has signed his name right below the title 'Chinese Preface'. He begins the preface with a succinct discussion of the relationship between fiction and autobiography, and the question of life-writing, which are of course major concerns in Proust studies. And immediately, in the second paragraph, Cheng reveals that the kind of novel he is about to present is similar to the one that has been conceived by Proust.³¹ Interestingly, what follows then are *Proustian* – rather than Proust's actual – words in quotation marks as if they were directly taken from *La Recherche*, whereas, in reality, they are merely a condensed appropriation at its best of a Proustian idea by Cheng. This 'quotation' attributed to Proust can be literally translated into English as follows: 'the real life is a re-lived life, and that re-lived life is obtained through the re-creation by memory and language'.³² In fact, Cheng's rendering of Proust's remark has become one of the most celebrated 'Proust quotations' in China, widely circulated among Chinese internet bloggers, and has effectively contributed to a popular Chinese discourse *on* Proust, which is not strictly verifiable *in* Proust. In this 'quotation', Cheng seems to be reading his own linguistic conviction into Proust's philosophy of life, a reading that strongly echoes the idea

³¹ Cheng, 'Zhongwenban zixu', p. 2. The first edition of the Chinese translation appeared in 2001. 这里所说的小说，不是按照通常的理解，而是如同法国作家普鲁斯特所设想的。

³² *Ibid.* 真正的生命是再活过的生命。而那再活过的生命是由记忆语言之再创造而获得的。

of a new language creating a new life, which is reiterated, for example, in his inaugural address at the Académie française:

ce qui m'advient [...] signifiera le début d'*une nouvelle vie* [...] surtout à partir de ce moment où j'ai résolument basculé dans la langue française, la faisant l'arme, ou l'âme, de ma création. Cette langue [...] m'a procuré cette distanciation par rapport à ma culture d'origine et à *mes expériences vécues* et, dans le même temps, elle m'a conféré cette aptitude à *repenser le tout, à transmuier ce tout en un lucide acte de re-crédation*.³³

This Chinese preface adds a new layer of paratextuality to the French original by formally announcing the author's intention to displace Proust into the Chinese context, and makes his work's connection with Proust intelligible to Chinese readers right from the outset.

Once again, this is not the first time in the course of our study that we observe the practice of adding an author's preface to the translated edition(s) of the work, which prominently features a discussion of Proust. We already examined Yu Hua's paraphrasing and appropriation of the prologue of *La Recherche* in one preface, and then in another, his conceptual discussion of time and memory in relation to Proust.³⁴

Beside the new preface, the Chinese translation of *Le Dit* also includes an interview with Cheng at the back of the book, in which Cheng further explains his personal relation to the French language and Proust. Cheng links his necessity of writing novels in French to his understanding of the 'Proustian state', a reiteration of his 'Proustian quotation' discussed earlier, i.e. the idea that the real life must be sought in language and re-experienced so that the mystery and 'fun' of life may be revealed and clarified. Cheng needs French, a new language for him, to re-experience the past in a new way, from a new angle, with a new spirit.³⁵ For Cheng, the linguistic choice also determines, in this case, the *genre* of his work:

³³ Cheng, 'Discours de réception'. My italics.

³⁴ As discussed before, Yu's Proustian paraphrase is also heavily influenced by Luo's Chinese preface to the *First Translation*. See II.3.1 of Part I.

³⁵ Cheng, 'Zhongxi hebi: chuangzaoxing de ronghe – fang Cheng Baoyi xiansheng' ('Chinese-West: Creative Amalgamation – Interviewing Mr. François Cheng', 中西合璧: 创造性地融

had it been written in Chinese, *Le Dit* would have been at best a ‘memoir’,³⁶ a book about the past we have lost. However, Cheng is self-consciously conceiving a book *à venir*, a ‘re-creation that transcends time’,³⁷ and, as will be explored later, cultural differences.

In fact, in almost every one of his interviews published in Chinese, Cheng comments on Proust at some point. For example, he observes that the philosophical profundity in Proust’s work – also in Cervantes’s and Balzac’s – is precisely what traditional Chinese novels lack, except for *Dream of the Red Chamber*;³⁸ he relates the Proustian enquiry into mortality, artistic creation and origin – which, for Cheng, is metaphysical in nature – to certain metaphysical tendencies in Daoist and Confucian philosophies;³⁹ and on a personal level, he thinks that he shares Proust’s sensitivity, sense of (self-)alienation and critique of the superficiality of society life.⁴⁰ These are just a few Proust references which have been singled out from Cheng’s Chinese interviews in different contexts and do not form a coherent argument about Cheng’s approximation of Proust. This varied list of comments attempts to convey the idea that the ways in which Cheng engages with Proust are multifarious, without necessarily looking to prove his commitment to Proust, as one would have expected from a Proust scholar. It shows how resourcefully inspirational and

合——访程抱一先生), in *Tianyi yan*, pp. 303-318 (p. 310). This is a paraphrase of Cheng’s following remark: 我写小说时处于普鲁斯特所说的一种状态。他认为真正的生命不止于生命那一瞬间, 当时生活过的要以语言去寻求, 去重新体验。用语言才能给生活以光照和意义, 生活真正的奥秘和趣味才能全面地展示出来。[...] 进行超越年华的再创造, 用新的眼光、从新的角度、以新的精神去看同一个过去。

³⁶ *Ibid.* 用中文写反而有点勉强, 最多是一部回忆录。

³⁷ *Ibid.* 超越年华的再创造

³⁸ Qian, ‘Zhongxifang’, p. 7.

³⁹ ZHANG Ning, ‘Cheng Baoyi xiansheng yu ta de huojiang xiaoshuo *Tianyi yan*: yu Zhang Ning duihua’ (‘Mr. Cheng Baoyi and His Award-winning Novel *Tianyi yan*: Dialogue with Zhang Ning’, 程抱一先生和他的获奖小说《天一言》: 与张宁对话) (2003) <<http://www.mayacafe.com/forum/topic1sp.php3?tkey=1065524624>> [accessed 9 December 2014]

⁴⁰ Zhou Kexi, ‘Bali, yu Cheng Baoyi xutan’ (‘Paris, Chatting with François Cheng’, 巴黎, 与程抱一叙谈), in *Yi bian cao* (译边草) (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2012), pp. 181-189 (p. 185).

intellectually stimulating the figure and the work of Proust are for Cheng to realize his own literary ambition from the most personal to the most abstract levels.

Cheng's intertextual 'play' with Proust's *La Recherche* in the Chinese context does not stop at *Le Dit*. It is worth mentioning that the choice of the Chinese title for Cheng's second novel *L'Éternité n'est pas de trop* as 此情可待 ('this love that keeps waiting') is essentially inspired by the same verse which has inspired the iconic 'poetic' translation of 'à la recherche du temps perdu' as 追忆似水年华 ('pursuing the memory of time/years as water/river'). The penultimate line of the poem, 锦瑟 'the brocaded se',⁴¹ by the well-known poet LI Shangyin (李商隐 AD 812-58) reads: 此情可待成追忆 ('this love that keeps waiting has become the pursuit of memory'), and it echoes the second line, 一玄一柱思年华 ('every plucking of every string makes one ponder upon the passing years/time'). Therefore, the two elements – 'the pursuit of memory' and 'the passing years/time' – which constitute the main part of the Chinese title for *La Recherche*, are found at both ends of 'this love that keeps waiting'. Via the same source of poetic reference, the Chinese title of Cheng's second novel seems symbiotically to join up two canonical texts originated from two very different and often contrastive literary and cultural traditions, especially to the Chinese mind.⁴² The importance of Li's poem as a point of reference will be further highlighted when we are examining Cheng's 'reorientation' of Proust's aesthetics towards

⁴¹ Se is an ancient twenty-five-stringed plucked musical instrument, similar to a zither.

⁴² For the Chinese readership, it is essentially a 'game' of literary associations. Given the widespread popularity of the verse and the line, 'this love that keeps waiting has become the pursuit of memory', in particular, as soon as one sees or hears the first part, 'this love that keeps waiting', which is the title of Cheng's novel, one automatically thinks of the second part, 'the pursuit of memory'. One 'pursues the memory' of what? – 'Of time as water/river', and one finally thinks of Proust. This chain of association is a most straightforward indicator of the establishment of canonicity of Proust's work in its Chinese reception. Cheng specifically mentions this literary association in his interview with Zhou Kexi. See Zhou, 'Cheng Baoyi', p. 187.

the idea of ‘transformation’ in classical Chinese thought, as Cheng alludes to the Daoist parable ‘the butterfly dream’, which is explicitly referenced in Li’s poem.⁴³

One of the literary sources which supplements the element of ‘water/river’ to the Chinese title of *La Recherche* is the great classical play, *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mu dan ting*, 牡丹亭), a (mainly) romantic tale by TANG Xianzu (汤显祖 1550-1616). The line reads: 如花美眷, 似水流年 (‘beautiful companion like the flower, fleeting years as water’).⁴⁴ Cheng’s *L’Éternité*, frequently advertised as ‘un *Tristan et Iseult* chinois’, is also a classical Chinese romantic tale which takes place in the same period. The story is presented as the narrator’s imaginative reconstruction after his discovery of an old book thanks to a French sinologist of the twentieth century. Cheng may well have taken recourse to available literary models from the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries such as *The Peony Pavilion* for this *translingual* rewriting of a Chinese literary tradition. The theme of the descent to the underworld that prominently features in *The Peony Pavilion* would have been of great interest to Cheng, as he repeatedly elaborates on this theme – albeit citing different sources – in *Le Dit*.⁴⁵ Although exploring Cheng’s contrasting novelistic conceptions between *Le Dit* and *L’Éternité* is outside the scope of the present study which focuses only on the former as a ‘Proustian rewriting’, it is nevertheless helpful to bear in mind Cheng’s alternative mode of cross-cultural rewriting – i.e. the act of writing a classical Chinese romance in French (not without considerable diegetic reconfigurations) – when we, towards the end of this chapter, try to draw a conclusion on Cheng’s overall ambition to

⁴³ It is the third line of the poem: 庄生晓梦迷蝴蝶 (‘like the butterfly that obsesses Zhuangzi in his reverie at dawn’).

⁴⁴ As mentioned in Part I Chapter II, 似水流年 is *the* translation advocated by Wang Xiaobo as the Chinese title for *La Recherche*, which he subsequently uses as the title of his own novella.

⁴⁵ See the section ‘Myth of Orpheus’.

achieve ‘cultural transcendence’ through cross-cultural dialogues which can be initiated by different forms of ‘cultural translation’.

At any rate, ‘The Brocaded Se’ and *The Peony Pavilion* are the two most canonical sources that constitute a key literary expression *needed* culturally to displace Proust and accommodate his work in China. The element of ‘water/river’ as well as the ‘pursuit of memory’ in the Chinese title of *La Recherche* can be best understood as a Derridean *supplément*. Just like the title of Derrida’s chapter ‘“ce dangereux supplément” ’ in *De la grammatologie*, which is taken from Rousseau’s *Confessions*, the Chinese translation of *La Recherche* supplies itself with other texts. Derrida formulates the ‘cohabitation’ of the two ‘strange’ yet ‘necessary’ significations of the supplement as follows:

Le supplément s’ajoute, il est un surplus, une plénitude enrichissant une autre plénitude, le *comble* de la présence. Il cumule et accumule la présence. [...] Il ne s’ajoute que pour remplacer. Il intervient ou s’insinue à-la-place-de; s’il comble, c’est comme on comble un vide. S’il représente et fait image, c’est par le défaut antérieur d’une présence. [...] il ne s’ajoute pas simplement à la positivité d’une présence, il ne produit aucun relief, sa place est assignée dans la structure par la marque d’un vide. Quelque part, quelque chose ne peut se remplir *de soi-même*, ne peut s’accomplir qu’en se laissant combler par signe et procuration.⁴⁶

Chinese thought and aesthetic traditions are precisely the ‘mark of an emptiness’ in Proust’s work, which the Chinese title symbolically fills up.

As mentioned both in the Introduction and demonstrated in Part I Chapter II, this particular supplement of ‘water/river’ is crucial to our understanding of the critical as well as creative receptions of Proust among Chinese writers and intellectuals. The iconic Chinese title for *La Recherche* provokes an entirely different range of literary and, more generally, cultural associations. Given the extreme complexity and difficulty of Proust’s language and the – to some – impossible length of his book, overflowing with unfamiliar cultural

⁴⁶ Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), p. 208. Italics in the original, my emphasis is both italicized and underlined.

references, these Chinese cultural associations paratextually indicate to Chinese readers the kind of texts they could relate it to and leave them to pick up the pieces that their own cultural repertoire allows them to understand. Proust's 'water/river' becomes 'virtuous' when related to Daoist teaching.⁴⁷ Proustian laws of transformation and Proustian concepts of time and space resonate with teachings of the *Book of Changes*, as we have seen in Cheng. Proust's unconventional writing style, philosophical enquiry into the novelistic genre and critique of human vanity are to be understood through *Dream of the Red Chamber*.⁴⁸ By contrast, the encyclopaedic cultural references, from the Bible and Greek mythology, to philosophers (Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson), artists (Beethoven, Wagner, Vermeer, Giotto) and innumerable other European writers, are, in large part, neglected by a readership with an utterly different cultural upbringing and formation. I have outlined the various strategies adopted by different Chinese translators to tackle the problem of 'cultural negligence' on the readers' part in Chapter I. Perhaps such a phenomenon is best described – not without a sense of irony – in Proust's own words:

Car ils ne seraient pas, selon moi, mes lecteurs, mais les propres lecteurs d'eux-mêmes, mon livre n'étant qu'une sorte de ces verres grossissants comme ceux que tendait à un acheteur l'opticien de Combray; mon livre grâce auquel je leur fournirais le moyen de lire en eux-mêmes.⁴⁹

Startling though it might sound, this phenomenon of appropriating Proust to Chinese culture is far from unique. In fact, literary theorists have long been aware of such a role of the reader in the production of meaning at stake. Terry Eagleton makes a strikingly similar

⁴⁷ GUO Guihua, 'lun Zai Siwan jia naban zhong de shui yixiang' ('Discussing the Image of Water in *Du côté de chez Swann*', 论《在斯万家那边》中的水意象), *Journal of Xinxiang University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 25.1 (2011), 102-104.

⁴⁸ The comparative study between *La Recherche* and *Dream of the Red Chamber* is most substantially carried out by Tu. See Tu Weiqun, *Yanguang de jiaozhi: zai Cao Xueqin yu Masai'er Pulusite zhijian* (*Interweaving the Visions: Between Qinxue Cao and Marcel Proust*, 眼光的交织: 在曹雪芹与马塞尔·普鲁斯特之间) (Nanjing: Yilin, 2014).

⁴⁹ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 610.

remark to the above-cited passage when he is explaining 'reception theory' and 'the Constance school of reception aesthetics' (including Wolfgang Iser and Hans R. Jauss): 'it is as though what we have been "reading," in working our way through a book, is ourselves'.⁵⁰ *La Recherche*, as essentially a *foreign* sign of 'the Other', is therefore read as 'an allegory of internal otherness',⁵¹ an otherness brought out by the temporal distance in the Chinese reader's relation to the Chinese cultural heritage and by the socio-political ideological evolution discussed in the Introduction.

However, Cheng's situation is different. Permanently residing in France, his critically creative take on Proust in *Le Dit* is firmly grounded in his forty-year scholarly learning of Western art and philosophy, but *always* in dialogue with the culture of his origin.⁵² Rather like the Derridean supplement, Cheng's ultimate interest in Proust, lies precisely in the 'void' of relation of Proust's work with China. *La Recherche* may have achieved its canonical status in the West more than half a century ago. In the Chinese context, Proust could be said to have truly secured his position as an integral part of the Western canon only in the past decade. When Cheng started to draft his first novel in the late 1980's, Proust's *La*

⁵⁰ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 79.

⁵¹ This phrase is conveniently borrowed from Christopher Bush who distinguishes two types of Modernist *topoi*, those claiming to 'represent the Other' and those citing cultural otherness 'in an allegory of internal otherness'. We will come back to this useful paradigm in the Conclusion when we draw conceptual comparisons between the mainland Chinese writers' and Cheng's engagements with Proust's work. See Christopher Bush, 'The Other of the Other?: Cultural Studies, Theory, and the Location of the Modernist Signifier', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 42.2 (2005), 162-80 (p. 171).

⁵² His entire body of poetic works (in French) engages with the theme of 'dialogue'. He reiterates in all his interviews the necessity of creating and getting involved in East-West cultural dialogues with such essential qualities as equality, tolerance and openness, and the ultimate goal of achieving cultural harmony not hegemony through cultural transcendence. See NIU Jingfan, *Duihua yu ronghe: Cheng Baoyi de chuanguo shijian yanjiu* ('dialogue and fusion: research on François Cheng's creative practice') (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Science Press, 2008), p. 9. See also Qian, 'Zhongxifang', p. 13.

Recherche was not yet available in Chinese.⁵³ It is no coincidence that Cheng wrote a special preface in 2000 for the Chinese translation of *Le Dit* and began the preface by discussing fiction and autobiography as forms of life-writing, particularly in relation to Proust. On the one hand, Cheng clearly wishes this Western canonical work, which was previously practically unknown to Chinese readers (much like Cheng's own reputation in China until he received the *Prix Femina* in France and was elected to the Académie française), to attract more attention. On the other hand, the Chinese preface and the interview paratextually supplement the French original, further insisting on a dynamic cross-cultural communication about the differences and common ground between two literary traditions. If the explicit reference to Proust in *Le Dit* (cited earlier) only makes a case of intertextuality, the author's opening indicative remark in the Chinese preface is enough to make *Le Dit* a hypertext of *La Recherche*.⁵⁴ In other words, Cheng's *Le Dit* spurs on French readers to assimilate a Chinese culture that is *indeterminably* channeled through a French canonical text. As Genette concludes: 'il y a dans tout hypertexte une *ambiguïté* . . . Cette ambiguïté tient précisément au fait qu'un hypertexte peut à la fois se lire pour lui-même, et dans sa relation à son hypotexte'.⁵⁵ At the same time, the novel in translation instructs Chinese readers in the appreciation of the same foreign canonical text, which, for reasons outlined in the Introduction, did not receive its merited national recognition.

The 'parallel' which Cheng intentionally sets up between *La Recherche* and *Le Dit* is only one more developed example derived from his broader enterprise of 'cultural transcendence'. Subsequent to the paragraph on Proust in the Chinese preface, Cheng evokes the idea of a 'spiritual journey' (*xinlu licheng*, 心路历程) that is shared by all great

⁵³ See the Introduction.

⁵⁴ Genette's famous example is James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the very title of which propels readers to make all the *indeterminable* connections between his novel based in Dublin and Homer's *Odysseus*.

⁵⁵ Genette, *Palimpsestes*, p. 450.

literary works. He first juxtaposes a few Chinese canonical texts, i.e. *Songs of the South* (*Chuci*, 楚辞) and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, with *The Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost* and *Ulysses*; and rhetorically questions if a similar ‘spiritual journey’ could still take place on ‘this land of hardship cracked open by turmoil’.⁵⁶ Cheng’s ‘land of hardship’ ‘generally refers to the common earth that we all rely on for existence’; but in the context of his book, it refers to ‘that self-claimed “Middle” Kingdom’.⁵⁷ Cheng subtly puns on the historical name of China to suggest a time-space where spiritual journeys could take place, in response to his own question.⁵⁸ ‘Middle’ Kingdom here does not imply, as it used to, China as the centre of the world, but the very opposite of that – the metaphysical and essential ‘void’ territory or platform in which cultural transcendence takes place through dialogue. Cheng evidently tries to engage Chinese readers in a cultural China *decentered* in the literature of the world, which breaks, or indeed, transcends the dualist perception of national *versus* foreign literatures. As I shall demonstrate towards the end, this idea goes hand in hand with Cheng’s conception of *le vide médian*.

For this reason, despite Cheng’s extensive knowledge of European culture, he still chooses to creatively embrace rather than dismiss the various epistemic dangers posed in the Chinese ‘self-reading’ reception of Proust summarized earlier. Nonetheless, it would seem necessary to make an essential distinction between the cross-cultural imaginings of Proust that are mostly limited to the Chinese traditions in the context of mainland China, and those that set out to connect and dislocate the Chinese traditions as well as Proust with and to *each other*. In *Le Dit*, whilst consciously engaging with a wide range of Proustian

⁵⁶ Cheng, ‘Zhongwenban zixu’, pp. 2-3. 在这片动荡而裂开的难土上，从此何来空间铺陈心路，何来时间延展历程？

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 3. 我说难土，广义是指我们这个共同赖以生存的大地。然而倘若回到本书，则特指那个自名为“中”的国度

⁵⁸ ‘在这片动荡而裂开的难土上，从此何来空间铺陈心路，何来时间延展历程？’ English translation: ‘In this land of cataclysm, turmoil and hardship, from now on, where do we find the time and space for our spiritual journeys?’

themes – time, space, the universal laws of transformation, love and friendship, the role of art – Cheng constantly adjusts his angles to and repositions aspects of Proust's work by simultaneously evoking and analyzing a range of Eastern philosophical and literary texts including those already mentioned. The specific points of comparison from philosophy, to art and to religion are, as will be explored, thought-provoking.

Western scholars working on non-Western thought – arguably since E. Said's *Orientalism* – are haunted by the horror of *inauthenticity*, which often deflates their arguments and other scholarly efforts suspected of exoticism, and the same holds true for Chinese scholars working on Western thought. Inauthenticity further hints at distortion and loss in cultural transfer. But for Cheng, inauthenticity that results from cultural miscommunication is still positively corrigible in a dialogue, for authenticity to come. However, inauthenticity that comes out of the *horror* to communicate is self-defeating and fatal. More importantly, cultural authenticity is not locked in any single monolithic cultural history and tradition, to which only the culture in question should own the key. In actual fact, cultural authenticity is sought through deliberately crossing, challenging and rethinking cultural boundaries by both Tianyi and Cheng, as the latter comments on his own project, 'ma démarche, sans prétention de ma part, est très proche de celle de Proust: avec cette langue, j'ai pu repenser ma vie, et repenser ma pensée, *autrement* que si j'étais resté en Chine'.⁵⁹ In *Le Dit*, Cheng precisely seizes the opportunity to explore and *rework creatively* elements in both Proust's work and Chinese philosophical and aesthetic traditions, and make them 'speak to' each other. In short, Tianyi's imagined '*A la recherche du temps à venir*' is Cheng's determination to search for deep *spiritual* – rather than empirical – correspondences and connections between two very different cultures.

⁵⁹ Cheng, 'Double Culture', pp. 370-371. My italics.

Cheng's critical and creative reorientation of Proust as 'un écrivain tutélaire de l'Occident',⁶⁰ who however, unlike some of his contemporaries such as Judith Gautier and Pierre Loti, never claims to have acquired substantial knowledge of the Far East except for the *japonisme à la mode* in certain Parisian salons, towards the Chinese and Chinese diasporic contexts, manifests precisely the powerful fictional reconfigurability and prefigurability of literature.⁶¹ Speaking from the French perspective, Luc Fraisse considers that the discussion provoked by Cheng's explicit fictional approach to Proust

prendra un tout autre chemin; non celui d'objections ou de reproches, mais celui d'un héritage repensé, celui d'une création décalée par rapport à celle de Proust, revenant sur son œuvre pour extraire de la nouveauté, et aussi pour en rêver la postérité.⁶²

Taking the Chinese perspective into account, Cheng's take on Proust could indeed be described as *deux héritages repensés* which are pushed to converge in Cheng's works, creating novelty and posterity for both cultural traditions.

⁶⁰ Fraisse, *Petite Musique*, p. 633.

⁶¹ I echo Spivak's observation of Comparative Literature as a discipline that attempts to 'harness the power of fiction as it approaches Area Studies and the social science disciplines'. She thus continues: 'literature cannot predict, but it may prefigure'. Cheng's writing (which is to be explored in great detail) not only 'prefigures' a new type of transcultural literary aesthetics, it also 'reconfigures' the intercultural dynamics between France and China at large through, as I hope to have well demonstrated by the end of Part II, the process of cultural convergence to cultural transcendence. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 49.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 634.

II. Traits chinois / démarche proustienne

The second half of this subtitle is, of course, taken from Cheng's own claim, whereas the first half is inspired by a recent seminal work on Franco-Chinese literature and art entitled 'Traits chinois / Lignes francophones: Écriture, images, cultures',¹ which promises to be a disciplinary milestone in the ways we conceptualize the generality as well as particularity of Franco-Chinese literature and art. This present study of the textual relations between Cheng's and Proust's works, which is more of a specialist nature, will hopefully not only reaffirm many of the observations made in *Traits chinois*, but also suggest a number of theoretical modifications as well as new conceptual findings.

Speaking of the first-stage development of the Chinese Francophony in the 'profoundly conflictual' nineteenth century, Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude in their Introduction remark:

L'arrivée brutale des Occidentaux, dont l'industrie pouvait vaincre l'armée impériale et imposer sa volonté à la Chine, a profondément affecté les Chinois dans leurs croyances, leur confiance, leur système de valeurs. Les Occidentaux, sans coloniser le pays à proprement parler, représentèrent à la fois *le modèle à imiter au niveau de la technique, et l'« autre » auquel s'opposer sur le plan des valeurs.*²

Cheng obviously contributes to the subsequent stage(s) of this development. Throughout the twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals never – perhaps with the exception of the later period of Mao's regime – ceased to 'imitate' the West 'au niveau de la technique'. However, this basic paradigm significantly shifted from opposing to *joining in* the values of the 'other', in a much larger and increasingly global framework especially since the 1980's. Indeed, *joining in the 'other' from the opposite* captures the central line of enquiry pursued by this very thesis, from the Chinese translation of Proust to mainland Chinese writers' intertextual

¹ *Traits chinois / lignes francophones: Écriture, images, cultures*, ed. by Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2012).

² Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude, 'Introduction', in *Traits chinois*, pp. 9-24 (p. 9). My italics.

engagement with Proust and finally to a Franco-Chinese writer's transcultural dialogue with Proust. Cheng's *démarche proustienne* does not signify an aesthetic destination, but a critical as well as geographic point of departure, an aesthetic of reorientation and *rapprochement*. It is also in this sense that one should understand Tianyi's qualification of 'A la recherche du temps à venir' as '*contrairement à Proust*'.

II.1. Artistic Initiation

Apart from their shared concern over 'the problematics of life-writing' as mentioned in our discussion of Cheng's Chinese preface, one of the other most evident resonances between *Le Dit* and *La Recherche* is the generic conception of their works as both *Bildungsromane* and *Künstlerromane*. Both narratives revolve around the protagonist's individual growth and development through experiences of life. Both protagonists are also artists in the making who do not only learn to live, but also learn to 'translate' – Proust's own word – the signs of those living experiences. Experience of life opens the cognitive and affective dimensions of aesthetic experience. Just as 'Marcel devient écrivain',³ Tianyi becomes a painter and calligrapher. It is the creation of artworks that marks out moments of spiritual exaltation for both protagonists, which often provokes ontological discussions in the novels. Cheng in his Chinese preface describes his desire to write his novel as an attempt to search for and create the time and space for a 'spiritual journey', which, in many ways, puts a compelling interpretation on a too often quoted conclusive remark in the last volume of *La Recherche*: 'la vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la seule vie par conséquent réellement vécue, c'est la littérature'.⁴

³ Gérard Genette, 'Discours du récit. Essai de méthode', in *Figures III* (Paris : Seuil, 1972), pp. 67-272 (p. 237).

⁴ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 474.

Largely following the line of the exploration of *Le Dit* and *La Recherche* as novels of formation, the following analysis will focus on two key passages on artistic initiation from Proust and Cheng's respective works, namely, the episode of *les clochers de Martinville* from *La Recherche* and the mysterious Mount Lu in *Le Dit*. A few key concepts that emerge from this analysis will be more fully developed in our next section entitled 'artistic creation'. Throughout the two sections, I hope to demonstrate how the critical language coming from Proust studies can be interpreted in the light of Daoist ideas through a comparative study with Cheng's work.

Very early in the novels, Proust's protagonist and Cheng's Tianyi share a similar pattern of aesthetic experience: their respective artistic initiation is marked by a shift from the temptation to aesthetically represent an object to the aestheticizing subject's realization of the immanence of the creative activity itself.

Aesthetic experience, as the etymology of the term 'aesthetic' reveals, may be said to start from 'sensory perception'. Common to Proust's protagonist's and Tianyi's perception of mostly ordinary objects and natural phenomena, especially in relation to the general landscape, which respectively inspires the former's first composition and the latter's first drawing, is the subject's experience of *movement*. As Proust's protagonist has been put to sit next to the cabman on Dr. Percepied's hackney carriage which runs at speed 'comme le vent',⁵ he observes the rapid shifting of positions of three steeples interacting with the landscape, which provokes in him a 'plaisir spécial qui ne ressemblait à aucun autre':

[...] les deux clochers de Martinville, sur lesquels donnait le soleil couchant et que le mouvement de notre voiture et les lacets du chemin avaient l'air de faire changer de place, puis celui de Vieuxvicq qui, séparé d'eux par une

⁵ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 177.

colline et une vallée, et situé sur un plateau plus élevé dans le lointain, semblait pourtant tout voisin d'eux.⁶

The subject's own physical displacement results in the spatial reconfiguration of the objects in the landscape. Commenting on the same passage, Sara Danus considers the high speed at which the protagonist travels to be a key element which 'transforms the surrounding landscape into a phantasmagoria'.⁷ While high velocity certainly enhances the protagonist's sensory experience, or partakes in what Danus formulates as 'the aesthetics of the windshield', it is fundamentally the movement of his own body in the landscape which spurs him on to ruminate on the configurative relation between his being and the world. The expression 'avoir l'air' and the verb 'sembler' (and later 'paraître') are good indicators of the protagonist's suspicion of the phantasmagorical landscape transformed due to his own rapid movement. Fascinated though he might be, the subject does not, however, disintegrate in his own dreamlike vision of the landscape. The protagonist's implied suspicion enables him to maintain a certain distinction between his being and the world; and consequently, this suspicion leads him to speculate on a quasi metaphysical relation between the two:

En constatant, en notant la forme de leur flèche, le déplacement de leurs lignes, l'ensoleillement de leur surface, je sentais que je n'allais pas au bout de mon impression, que quelque chose était derrière ce mouvement, derrière cette clarté, quelque chose qu'ils semblaient contenir et dérober à la fois.⁸

This 'quelque chose', seemingly indeterminable ('contenir et dérober à la fois'), is characterized by its locus of intermediacy between the protagonist's primary perception of the visible ('forme', 'lignes', and 'surface') and that which is 'behind' such appearances. This

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 177-178.

⁷ Sara Danus, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 131.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 178.

'quelque chose' is not a concrete thing, but rather, a relation between the phenomena and what may be loosely described as 'noumenal':

Bientôt leurs lignes et leurs surfaces ensoleillées, comme si elles avaient été une sorte d'écorce se déchirèrent, *un peu de ce qui m'était caché en elles* m'apparut, j'eus une pensée qui n'existait pas pour moi l'instant avant, qui *se formula en mots* dans ma tête [...] ⁹

The mysterious and frictional ('se déchirèrent') relation between the phenomenal and the noumenal experienced by the subject invokes the necessity for their being realized in words. Proust's simile of the 'bark being torn off' ('une sorte d'écorce se déchirèrent') subtly affirms his earlier use of 'derrière' rather than, say, 'au-delà', to position this 'quelque chose', which as we will see, would nuance our understanding of the sense of 'being *in* the world'.

In comparison, Tianyi's aesthetic experience of movement is primarily through the subject's inner reflection on and eventual existential identification with the clouds. First, Tianyi perceives how the movement of the clouds decidedly affects the human vision of the colours, shapes, and scales of Mount Lu:

Par leurs mouvements capricieux, imprévisibles, par leurs teintes instables, rose ou pourpre, vert jade ou gris argent, ils transformaient la montagne en magie. Ils évoluaient au milieu des multiples pics et collines du mont Lu, s'attardant dans les vallées, s'élevant vers les hauteurs, maintenant ainsi un constant état de mystère. De temps à autre, subitement ils s'effaçaient, révélant alors au regard des hommes toute la splendeur de la montagne. ¹⁰

The movement of the clouds not only constantly changes man's sight of the mountain, but also causes the clouds to change their own ways of existence, and consequently, their different relations to man:

⁹ *Ibid.* My italics.

¹⁰ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 20.

Certains soirs, les brumes denses qui montaient, rencontrant les nuages en mouvement, provoquaient une précipitation et amenaient des ondées, qui déversaient leur eau pure dans les pots et les bocaux déposés par les habitants du village au pied des murs. C'est avec cette eau que ces derniers faisaient le meilleur thé du coin. Une fois averses passées, rapidement, les nuages se déchiraient et, le temps d'une éclaircie, laissaient voir le plus haut mont.¹¹

In short, the *manifested* movement of the clouds reveals the 'réalité cachée' of the universe:

'il était en perpétuelle transformation. Ce qui était apparemment stable se fondait dans le mouvant; ce qui était apparemment fini se noyait dans l'infini. Point d'état fixe ni définitif'.¹² The movement of the clouds heightens and transforms Tianyi's artistic sensibility – 'j'avais l'intuition que le nuage serait mon élément'¹³ and 'j'étais nuage' – producing 'exaltation' and 'allégresse' in Tianyi, which compel him to initiate his own artistic vocation: 'il faut sûrement faire quelque chose de cela'.¹⁴ As the condition of vocation converges with the universal principle, the subject is urged to create art to sustain the primordial relation between its authentic being and the world. Cheng later reiterates this real life experience of Mount Lu as a quest for 'la beauté originelle', 'un mystère insondable', that calls or summons – the etymology of 'vocation' – him to participate in its adventure.¹⁵

Proust is certainly not insensitive to the special qualities of the clouds or the 'brume' that draw literary inspiration. In *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, he characterizes the literary 'substance', this 'quelque chose de vague et d'obsédant comme le souvenir', as 'une atmosphère', and situates it in the space '*entre les mots comme la brume d'un matin de*

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 20-21.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 22.

¹⁵ 'Elle semble m'appeler à participer à son aventure, et cet appel me bouleverse, me foudroie'. François Cheng, *Cinq méditations sur la beauté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008), p. 15.

Chantilly'.¹⁶ Edward Bizub recapitulates Proustian poetics precisely as 'l'esthétique des brumes'.¹⁷ Exploring the role of Dutch paintings in Proust's works, Nathalie Aubert affirms that the appreciation of fog and mist is a key feature in the French imagination of Germanic landscape aesthetics even before Proust's time.¹⁸ Citing a range of Chinese expressions, 'nuages et pluies (du Mont Wu)' (巫山云雨), 'manger brumes et nuages' (吞云吐雾), 'caresser brumes et nuages' (腾云驾雾), 'dormir parmi brumes et nuages' (卧眠云间),¹⁹ Cheng evidently senses the strong resonance in the Chinese literary and philosophical traditions and explicitly pushes this aesthetic concern of the moving clouds towards an ontological one.

The experience of movement animates and reanimates things. A strong sense of animism²⁰ manifests itself in both Proust's protagonist and Tianyi's anagnorisis of the aestheticized objects and the wider landscape. Cheng articulates this idea in terms of Daoist principles, i.e. the transformative nature of things essentially revealed by the movement of the clouds points to the primordial ontological state of all beings – the *souffle vital* or *souffle primordial* (*yuanqi*, 元气). It is the original source of all beings, as Tianyi rhetorically asks himself: 'n'est-ce pas ce qu'il y a de plus vrai, puisque toutes choses vivantes ne sont que "condensation du souffle?"'.²¹ In the landscape of Mount Lu, it is 'cette présence

¹⁶ Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Gallimard, 1954), p. 157.

¹⁷ Edward Bizub, *La Vénise intérieure* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1991), pp. 43-66.

¹⁸ Nathalie Aubert, 'La peinture hollandaise de notre mémoire', in *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui 8: Proust et la Hollande*, ed. by Sjef Houppermans, Manet van Monfrans, and Annelies Schulte Nordholt (New York: Edition Rodopi, 2011), pp. 131-47 (p. 135).

¹⁹ Cheng slightly modifies these expressions as he translates them into French and puts them in inverted commas. The corresponding Chinese expressions cited here are from Yang's translation of *Le Dit*. See Cheng, *Tianyi*, p. 6.

²⁰ The idea of animism in Proust's time was developed by Edward Tylor (1832-1917), often regarded as the founder of modern anthropology, in his evolutionary theory of religion. He borrows the term 'animism' from Aristotle to explain the function of religion in primitive societies. See Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1871).

²¹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 21.

éthérée et presque palpable' of the clouds – 'immatérielle et pourtant substantielle'²² –

which gives life to the landscape; and this transformed landscape, in return, reanimates the participating human agent. Cheng recapitulates this autobiographic experience in *Beauté*:

[...] à travers le mont Lu, la Nature, de toute sa formidable présence, se manifeste à l'enfant de six ou sept ans que je suis, comme un recel inépuisable, et surtout, comme une passion irrépressible. Elle semble m'appeler à participer à son aventure, et cet appel me bouleverse, me foudroie.²³

It should be noted that the clouds and the *souffle vital* are no equivalent conceptually speaking. The description of the former is only used by Cheng to help assimilate the Daoist concept of the latter. Tianyi, at this stage, is still intuitively observing the natural phenomenon without any proper conceptual understanding, 'dès cette époque, quoique confusément encore, j'avais l'intuition que le nuage serait mon élément'.²⁴ He finally learns the idea of *souffle vital* with references to Daoism, time, water/river, and the clouds from F. at the end of Part I, as the professor expounds:

Comment concevoir que l'irréversibilité de cet ordre impérieux qu'est le temps puisse être rompue. C'est ici qu'interviennent les Vides médians inhérents à la Voie. Eux-mêmes Souffles, ils impriment à la Voie son rythme, sa respiration et lui permettent surtout d'opérer la mutation des choses et son retour vers l'Origine, source même du Souffle primordial. Pour le fleuve, les Vides médians se présentent sous forme de nuages.²⁵

We notice Cheng's deliberate capitalization of 'Souffles' here. Tianyi later heuristically applies and refashions these principles to and in his reading of Western art and philosophy. There is a clear sense of linearity in Tianyi's intellectual development throughout the novel from unilateral to lateral thinking.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Cheng, *Beauté*, pp. 15-16.

²⁴ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 21.

²⁵ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 191.

Proust's protagonist's formulation of animism initially seems less totalizing than Tianyi's intuitive discovery ('toutes choses vivantes ne sont que "condensation du souffle"'). It is closely associated with a complex notion of analogy between the external landscape and the calling of the inner self – again the idea of 'vocation' – or what Proust formulates elsewhere as 'l'équivalent profond'.²⁶ Firstly, the protagonist tends to grasp this analogy in terms of a representation in words, 'sans me dire que ce qui était caché derrière les clochers de Martinville'. This hidden something, which he says earlier provokes in him 'un plaisir obscur',

devait être *quelque chose d'analogue à une jolie phrase*, puisque c'est sous la forme de mots qui me faisaient plaisir, que cela m'était apparu, demandant un crayon et du papier au docteur, je composai malgré les cahots de la voiture, pour *soulager ma conscience et obéir à mon enthousiasme*.²⁷

What is hidden, mysterious and inexplicable must be captured in words so that the protagonist can prolong and perpetuate the aesthetic pleasure.

However, this 'jolie phrase' is not exactly 'l'équivalent *profond*', and the actual experience of composition suggests a rather different analogical process:

J'eus fini de l'écrire, je me trouvai si heureux, je sentais qu'elle (the piece of writing) m'avait si parfaitement débarrassé de ces clochers et de ce qu'ils cachaient derrière eux, que, comme si j'avais été moi-même une poule et si je venais de pondre un œuf, je me mis à chanter à tue-tête.²⁸

The notion of analogy shifts from 'une jolie phrase' – representational of that which is hidden behind – to the recognition of a certain thing-in-itself present in both the aestheticized object and the aestheticizing subject. The protagonist realizes that his piece of writing in fact presents itself and is 'parfaitement débarrassé' from what he has attempted

²⁶ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 877.

²⁷ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 178; p. 179. My italics.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 180.

to translate into words. His sense of pleasure does not derive from representation ‘sous la forme de mots’, which implies a certain intellectualization, interiorization or appropriation of the object of aesthetic experience; but rather as a result of *autopoiesis* after the protagonist’s submission to intuition. The quest for the real ‘équivalent profond’ is a different kind of ‘translation’ from perception to words, as Aubert remarks: ‘pour qu’il y ait authentiquement perception, il faut qu’il y ait authentique travail d’écriture. La perception n’est pas traduite par le moyen de mots et de phrases, mais *se cherche elle-même dans le langage*’.²⁹

Moreover, by comparing the protagonist’s aesthetic pleasure through creation to that of ‘une poule’ which ‘venai[t] de pondre un œuf’ singing ‘à tue-tête’, Proust twists the usual focus of the chicken-and-egg problem, which, in this context, would be the question whether the artist creates the artwork or the artwork makes the artist in the first place, and effectively locates the aesthetic experience at the level of an inner intuitive *body*. The experience of literary creation as well as sterility, no different from the biological condition, is *somatic* rather than cerebral. In fact, prior to this creative experience, the protagonist seems to have believed in precisely the contrary out of frustration:

Et ces rêves m’avertissaient que, puisque je voulais un jour être un écrivain, il était temps de savoir ce que je comptais écrire. Mais dès que je me le demandais, tâchant de trouver un sujet où je pusse faire tenir une signification philosophique infinie, *mon esprit s’arrêtait de fonctionner*, [...] je sentais que *je n’avais pas de génie ou peut-être une maladie cérébrale l’empêchait de naître*. [...] Ce sentiment intime, immédiat, que *j’avais du néant de ma pensée*, prévalait contre toutes les paroles flatteuses qu’on pouvait me prodiguer.³⁰

The kind of literary production, like Bergotte’s works, which seems to be ‘born’ out of a good brain only, is eventually considered to be sterile, as it does not bring about

²⁹ Aubert, *Traduction*, p. 49.

³⁰ Proust, *RTP I*, pp. 170-171. My italics.

pleasure. The narrator asserts towards the end of the novel: ‘quant aux “joies de l’intelligence” pouvais-je appeler ainsi ces froides constatations que mon œil clairvoyant ou mon raisonnement juste relevaient sans aucun plaisir et qui restaient *infécondes*?’³¹ One could indeed argue that it is the intuitive body – ‘blind’, indeterminable and unstable in terms of sense-making – that engenders the enigmas of the external world which initiates artistic creation in return for a certain existential certainty. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, ‘[le corps] dans l’opacité du sentir se tend vers des choses dont il n’a pas d’avance la clé, et dont cependant il porte en lui-même le projet, s’ouvrant à un Autre absolu qu’il prépare au fond de lui-même’.³²

From the experience of movement – be it physical displacement or inner reflection and identification – to animism, what we observe is a *mutually transformative relation* between the subject and the thing, between man and the world. This process, like Cheng’s ‘perpétuelle transformation’³³ of water, river, cloud, mist, rain, and the human subject, echoes one of the best-known Daoist parables in *Zhuangzi*, often known as ‘the butterfly dream’:

Once Zhuangzi dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuangzi. But he didn't know if he was Zhuangzi who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuangzi. Between Zhuangzi and a butterfly there must be *some* distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things.³⁴

³¹ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 444. My italics.

³² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 376.

³³ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 21.

³⁴ This Daoist parable explicitly features in Li Shangyin’s classic poem – an essential literary source for the Chinese title of *La Recherche* as well as that of Cheng’s second novel (Cf. Section I.3). See *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trad. by Burton Watson, <<http://terebess.hu/english/chuangtzu.html>> (Section Two) [accessed on 12th January 2015].

Although Zhuangzi's passage, which in many ways can be considered 'philosophy as fiction',³⁵ is not directly treating the subject of artistic initiation, it is nonetheless a strikingly similar idea that our analysis of artistic initiation has entailed. As will be examined later, it is precisely the process of artistic creation that fundamentally maintains that 'some distinction' between the artists and the landscapes.

Different from Proust's protagonist's first literary triumph,³⁶ Tianyi's first drawing is marked an aesthetic failure – precisely because the latter is far too preoccupied with the representation of the external aesthetic object and landscape rather than employing his artistic tools such as the Chinese brush and ink to further explore the 'cloudy' intuition *in* him:

Ce jour-là, donc, plongeant mon regard dans le liquide aux reflets sans fond, légèrement irisé, je vis apparaître la vision de la montagne nuageuse que j'avais captée le matin même. Sans tarder, je me mis à dessiner, m'efforçant *d'en restituer aussi bien l'aspect tangible que l'aspect évanescent*. Le résultat, hélas ! *ne correspondit pas, tant s'en faut, à ce que j'escomptais*.³⁷

As discussed before, representation implies a certain intellectual appropriation, and the quality of representation depends, more often than not, on the question of technique, which is part of the professional formation. For a child of eight or nine such as Tianyi, relatively – though not entirely – innocent of intellectual as well as technical training, it is

³⁵ This is also the title of Joshua Landy's illustrious book on Proust. It is a most common practice in ancient Chinese philosophy to start with a concrete model, through the process of analogy, to formulate an 'abstract' idea, whereas in the Western tradition, we tend to use analogy to *illustrate* or understand an 'abstract' idea.

³⁶ Still, this triumphant piece of 'poème en prose' by the protagonist is later met with severe criticism from M. de Norpois, which deeply dampens the protagonist's spirit for his literary vocation: 'je me sentais consterné, réduit; et mon esprit comme un fluide qui n'a de dimensions que celles du vase qu'on lui fournit, de même qu'il s'était dilaté jadis à remplir les capacités immenses du génie, contracté maintenant, tenait tout entier dans la médiocrité étroite où M. de Norpois l'avait soudain enfermé et restreint'. Proust, *RTP I*, p. 466.

³⁷ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 23. My italics.

particularly his own vocational disposition rather than professional formation, to which his artistic exploration should be committed.

Indeed, Tianyi's aesthetic failure at this stage is another example of artistic sterility, which demonstrates precisely how the obsession with intellect and technique can counterproductively obfuscate the authentic artistic vision. It is worth reminding ourselves that prior to the episode of *les clochers de Martinville*, Proust's protagonist's unfavourable belief in intellectual quality and abstract truth, too, prohibits his primary sensory impressions from being developed into an artistic vision and giving birth to artworks:

[...] il me parut plus affligeant encore qu'auparavant de n'avoir pas de dispositions pour le lettres [...] Alors, bien en dehors de toutes ces préoccupations littéraires et ne s'y rattachant en rien, tout d'un coup un toit, un reflet de soleil sur une pierre, l'odeur d'un chemin me faisaient arrêter par un plaisir particulier qu'ils me donnaient [...] Certes ce n'était pas des impressions de ce genre qui pouvaient me rendre l'espérance que j'avais perdue de pouvoir être un jour écrivain et poète, car elles étaient toujours liées à un objet particulier dépourvu de valeur intellectuelle et ne se rapportant à aucune vérité abstraite.³⁸

The protagonist does not submit to his intuition, and the kind of aesthetic pleasure that he intuitively senses is left unexplored and too readily sacrificed with the forlorn hope of creating a work of great intellect. The aesthetic pleasure is glossed over as a diversion from boredom and the feeling of powerlessness:

[...] elles [les impressions] me donnaient un plaisir irraisonné, l'illusion d'une sorte de fécondité et par là me distrayaient de l'ennui, du sentiment de mon impuissance que j'avais éprouvés chaque fois que j'avais cherché un sujet philosophique pour une grande œuvre littéraire.³⁹

Nevertheless, Tianyi's failed aesthetic experiment serves as an important lesson.

Although he does not succeed in producing the artwork he has expected, Tianyi at the end of the chapter becomes acutely aware of the limitless potential of the artistic tools he

³⁸ Proust, *RTP I*, p.176.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 177.

possesses: 'mais je fus conquis par le pouvoir magique du pinceau et de l'encre. Je pressentis que ce serait une arme pour moi. La seule peut-être que je posséderais pour me protéger de la présence écrasante du Dehors'.⁴⁰ It is no less revealing a remark than Proust's protagonist's realization of the artistic *autopoiesis*. Tianyi is convinced that his brush and ink have the magical power to preserve and enhance his inner sensibility against the pernicious intrusion from the 'outside', and create artworks that can mark out the 'aesthetic territories' between the inner and the outer – similar to Zhuangzi's 'some distinction' – establishing ultimately a relation between his being and the world.

II.2. Principles of Artistic Creation

This delineation of aesthetic territories is a fundamental paradigm of relation in both Cheng and Proust's theories of artistic creation. It could be understood as an effective measure against two orientations or movements of aesthetic activity.

First, Cheng's rather violent imagery of a 'weapon against the crushing outside' is a premonitory reference to the hardship of Tianyi's later life and the human misery during the period of political turmoil in China from the civil war to the establishment of the PRC leading up to the Cultural Revolution. The external circumstances aggressively intrude into the inner space of artistic sensibility and intuition, leaving little freedom and autonomy for accomplished artistic creation. Cheng specifically cites Mao's 'Discours de Yan'an sur la création littéraire et artistique' in 1942 which autocratically prescribes and imposes the 'correct' conception of art and literature, strictly narrowing down their purpose to the service of the working class and the advancement of socialism.⁴¹ This type of aesthetic activity not only turns art into propaganda, but also results in individuals' abandoning of art

⁴⁰ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 23.

⁴¹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 240.

altogether, as Tianyi comments on the life of his literary companion Haolang: 'dans sa lutte pour la survie, il en était venu à oublier la seule arme qu'il détenait: l'écriture'.⁴²

Conversely, dilettanti in *La Recherche* such as Swann and Charlus, who are seen to instrumentalize and appropriate the external object of aesthetic experience for their own interests, are labelled as 'idolaters of art'. Stéphane Chaudier concisely remarks:

L'idolâtre sacrifie son moi profond que l'objet découvre par les résonnances qu'il éveille en lui. Dans une relation féconde à l'objet, c'est à ce dernier que revient l'initiative : c'est lui qui donne 'la joie'. Au lieu de s'attacher au bouleversement que la chose produit en lui, l'idolâtre réalise un projet de maîtrise sur l'objet : la fleur devient sa fleur. L'idolâtre refuse à l'objet son statut de signe.⁴³

Idolaters of art are essentially self-absorbed and do not recognize the kind of animism in the object which contributes to an authentic aesthetic experience.

When listening to Vinteuil's unfinished music work performed by Morel at the Verdurins', the protagonist explicitly names the inner space as 'la patrie intérieure', open to artistic *self-exploration*, 'chaque artiste semble ainsi comme le citoyen d'une patrie inconnue, oubliée de lui-même'.⁴⁴ The artwork, the 'accent unique' of Vinteuil's work, is 'une preuve de l'existence irréductiblement individuelle de l'âme'.⁴⁵ The implication of an inner irreducible 'essence' in art⁴⁶ is a fruitful way to understand Tianyi's conviction of the magical power of his brush and ink as his only weapon ('arme') to protect himself against 'la présence écrasante du Dehors',⁴⁷ as the crude communist ideology attempts to crush the

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 371.

⁴³ Stéphane Chaudier, *Proust et le langage religieux: la cathédrale profane* (Paris: Champion, 2004), p. 272.

⁴⁴ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 761.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* My italics.

⁴⁶ The notion of 'essence' in art in *La Recherche* is most famously elaborated on by Deleuze, who sees it as a Platonic conception of Idea or Form. We will return to Deleuze's reading of the 'Proustian essence' in a later section.

⁴⁷ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 23. Elsewhere, Cheng often makes a link between 'arme' and 'âme' regarding his acquired creative medium such as the French language. For example, in his

sense of individuality and forbid any forms of spirituality other than the ideology itself. Just as 'la vision de l'univers', 'la patrie intérieure', of Vinteuil's work 'se tradui[t] par une altération générale des sonorités chez le musicien comme de la couleur chez le peintre', Tianyi's inner space of artistic creation can be 'translated' *par une altération générale de l'encre chez le calligraphe*:

Une fois le liquide prêt, je ne me lassais jamais de ce moment où, pour tester son épaisseur, je posais librement le pinceau pleinement imbibé sur le papier fin et translucide, lequel résorbait vite l'encre tout en se laissant « irriguer » un peu. Puis, durant de longues minutes encore, elle conservait sa fraîcheur lustrée comme pour montrer son contentement de ce que le papier, consentant et réceptif, acceptât de la savourer. Cette magie du papier qui recevait l'encre, les Anciens la comparaient à la peau d'un jeune bambou légèrement poudreuse qui reçoit des gouttes de rosée.⁴⁸

Importantly, Tianyi's revelation at the initial stage of his artistic development emphasizes the artistic medium rather than *style* of expressing of the external world, 'j'eus une soudaine révélation. Tout ce que le monde extérieur provoquait en moi, je pouvais finalement l'exprimer au moyen de quelque chose à ma portée: l'Encre'.⁴⁹ While the study of the artistic medium aims at the mastery of technique, the exploration of style reveals an artistic vision, as Proust puts it:

[...] le style pour l'écrivain aussi bien que la couleur pour le peintre est une question non de technique mais de vision. Il est la révélation, qui serait impossible par des moyens directs et conscients, de la différence qualitative qu'il y a dans la façon dont nous apparaît le monde, différence qui, s'il n'y avait pas l'art, resterait le secret éternel de chacun.⁵⁰

Tianyi's artistic revelations will precisely go from medium to style, from technique to vision.

welcoming speech at the *Académie française*, he stresses, '[...] j'ai résolument basculé dans la langue française, la faisant l'arme, ou l'âme, de ma création'. See Cheng, 'Discours de réception'.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Proust, *RPT IV*, p. 474.

Common to both Cheng and Proust's aesthetic foundation is the idea that art is not an image *of* the external world; or, if it is representational at all, its purpose and result are precisely to 'mettre en cause le modèle mimétique'.⁵¹ The maturation of Tianyi's art is marked by his step-by-step learning from representational to affective poetics.

Despite its apparent failure, Tianyi's first creative attempt teaches him that a representational approach alone to the relation between the mysterious landscape of Mount Lu and his 'cloudy' intuition is far from sufficient. Tianyi initially receives his technical training of representational visual poetics from his father, who plays the 'rôle d'"instituteur"' and 'd'écrivain public' in the village,⁵² by practising the art of calligraphy:

A la suite de mon père, j'appris certes à copier les modèles de différents styles laissés par les maîtres anciens mais également à observer les modèles vivants qu'offrait la nature omniprésente : les herbes, les arbres et bientôt les champs de thé en terrasses.⁵³

Something special about the art of calligraphy deserves a little clarification. A number of pictograms present in Chinese characters are originally imitative of external objects and natural phenomena. However, throughout history, they have been visually modified, enriched, distorted, formalized, and re-fashioned according to the evolving human 'visions' such as functionalities, imaginations, conceptions, configurations, and relations of those objects and phenomena. Some of the pictograms are thus further developed into ideograms, or become parts of more complicated characters.⁵⁴ That is, the

⁵¹ Aubert, *Traduction*, p. 77.

⁵² Cheng, *Dit*, p. 19.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁵⁴ Not all Chinese characters are pictograms and ideograms. There are many more complicated character formations which nevertheless bear certain relations with the basic pictograms and ideograms. Modern linguistics usually categorizes the Chinese language as a *logographic* system, in which a *grapheme* is used to represent a word or morpheme. However, the phonetic dimension of many graphemes is often present. In contrast, the Latin alphabet belongs to a *phonographic* system in which graphemes play little role. As a result, the *symbolic* values of individual letters are significantly lowered. For a detailed

imitation of the external has shifted to the expression of the inner, a fundamental form of *interpretation*, and this shift signals the changing human relation to the external world. The exercise of copying the artwork while observing the living models motivates Tianyi to speculate on the possible relation between man and nature:

Je constatais à quel point ces alignements réguliers et rythmés, apparemment imposés par les hommes, épousaient intimement la forme sans cesse différenciée du terrain, révélant ainsi les « veines du Dragon » qui les structuraient en profondeur.⁵⁵

Crucially, very early in Tianyi's artistic training, he heuristically senses that the authentic artistic creation ultimately creates a communal relation between man and nature, 'pénétré de cette vision que nourrissait mon apprentissage de la calligraphie, je commençais à me *sentir en communion charnelle* avec le paysage'.⁵⁶ This characterization of man's primordial relation to the world as primarily *charnelle*, i.e. physical, corporal or bodily, especially through linguistic as well as aesthetic experience (e.g. the calligraphy) is recurrent in *Le Dit*. For example, in Chapter 18, Tianyi appreciates that every nook and cranny ('le moindre recoin') of Mount Emei and Mount Erlang in Sichuan 'montre, sans retenue, sa *présence charnelle*. Ces vallées profondément creusées, à l'argile tendre et rouge, couleur sang, évoquent, avec leurs sentiers qui se croisent, les entrailles ouvertes d'un sol originel'.⁵⁷

This vision of the world that sees man's existence as a fundamentally hermeneutic activity is not without resonance in *La Recherche*. Coincidental though it may be, the protagonist does compare his way of knowing the world around him to the reading of

introduction of the Chinese writing system, see John DeFrancis, *The Chinese Language: Facts and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 'Veine du Dragon' in classical Chinese characters look like this: 龍脈. Such a calligraphic 'revelation' can be understood in light of the *fengshui* concept – a philosophical system which aims to harmonize inhabitants, humans and animals alike, with their surrounding environment.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 114.

something similar to a logographic language, 'j'avais suivi dans mon existence une marche inverse de celle des peuples qui ne se servent de l'écriture phonétique qu'après n'avoir considéré les caractères que comme une suite de symboles'.⁵⁸ In phonetic writings, such as French, individual letters do not *mean* much until they have been grouped together in a more or less prescribed way that delivers a specific meaning – what the protagonist calls 'énoncé direct'.⁵⁹ In other words, the 'suite de symboles' *make* sense of the writing. Proust's approach is different: writing is the *source* of meaning and every symbol or character that constitutes the writing is a sign for interpretation. For this reason, Deleuze describes the protagonist as an 'Egyptologist':

Nous ne sommes pas physiciens ni métaphysiciens: nous devons être égyptologue. Car il n'y a pas de lois mécaniques entre les choses, ni de communications volontaires entre les esprits. Tout est impliqué, tout est compliqué, tout est signes, sens, essence.⁶⁰

Just as Proust's protagonist and Tianyi are learning to interpret the symbols and signs in order to create art, 'l'égyptologue', Deleuze adds, 'en toutes choses, est celui qui parcourt une initiation – l'apprenti'.⁶¹

For Proust, as well as for Cheng, the language – both literal and figurative – that we use to establish and maintain our relation to the world is fundamentally *corporel* (or *charnel* in Cheng), as Deleuze points out:

Il n'existe pas de choses ni d'esprits, il n'y a que des corps: corps astraux, corps végétaux... La biologie aurait raison, si elle savait que les corps en eux-mêmes sont déjà langage. Les linguistes auraient raison s'ils savaient que le langage est toujours celui des corps.⁶²

⁵⁸ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 596.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Deleuze, *Signes*, p. 112.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

Proust's protagonist remarks himself that 'les paroles elles-mêmes ne me renseignaient qu'à la condition d'être interprétées à la façon d'un afflux de sang à la figure d'une personne qui se trouble, à la façon encore d'un silence subit'.⁶³ We have already examined Proust's bodily and somatic analogy for literary creation, 'comme si j'avais été moi-même une poule et si je venais de pondre un oeuf, je me mis à chanter à tue-tête'.⁶⁴

The second key moment of Tianyi's artistic formation is found in his fruitful encounter with a hermitic master who admits Tianyi as his disciple. This is when Tianyi receives theoretical guidance on *affective* rather than representational visual poetics. The master first outlines the training route ('la voie') of 'la grande tradition ancienne' that Tianyi is already following, 'commencer par la calligraphie, continuer par le dessin qui permet de maîtriser la technique du trait, puis s'attaquer à l'art de l'encre pour aboutir enfin à une composition organique'.⁶⁵ The master's following teaching is evidently informed by Buddhist aesthetic practice:

[...] avec le regard de l'esprit, ce que les Anciens appelaient le troisième œil ou l'œil de Sapience. Comment posséder cet œil ? Il n'y a pas d'autre voie que celle fixée par les maîtres Chan, c'est-à-dire les quatre étapes du voir: voir; ne plus voir; s'abîmer à l'intérieur du non-voir; re-voir. Eh bien, *lorsqu'on re-voit, on ne voit plus les choses en dehors de soi; elles sont partie intégrante de soi, en sorte que le tableau qui résulte de ce re-voir n'est plus que la projection sans faille de cette intériorité fécondée et transfigurée.* Il faut donc atteindre la Vision. *Tu t'accroches encore trop aux choses. Tu te cramponnes à elles.* Or, les choses vivantes ne sont jamais fixes, isolées. Elles sont prises dans l'universelle transformation organique. Le temps de peindre, *elles continuent à vivre, tout comme toi-même tu continues à vivre.* En peignant, entre dans ton temps et entre dans leur temps, *jusqu'à ce que ton temps et leur temps se confondent.*⁶⁶

In Buddhism, especially its dominant Chinese school *Chan* (more commonly known in the West as *Zen* derived from the Japanese pronunciation), the Third Eye is also called 'the Eye

⁶³ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 596.

⁶⁴ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 180.

⁶⁵ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 161.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 162. My italics.

of Wisdom' (*huiyan*, 慧眼), in contrast to the Worldly Eye (*fanyan*, 凡眼). Put in a schematic way, the former is a mystical and esoteric concept as it sees the inner spiritual world, whereas the latter sees the external material world. Only a balanced combination of the two eyes allows the artist to achieve the ultimate vision.

The master's teaching sheds light on Tianyi's earlier creative failure. When '[s]'efforçant d[e] restituer aussi bien l'aspect tangible que l'aspect évanescent'⁶⁷ of Mount Lu in his painting, Tianyi clings too much to the external objects ('Tu t'accroches encore trop aux choses. Tu te cramponnes à elles') and attempts to fix them in their representation, rejecting their state of life ('elles continuent à vivre, tout comme toi-même tu continues à vivre'). An authentic work of art should only be 'la projection sans faille de cette intériorité fécondée et transfigurée'.

When Tianyi, once again, endeavours to draw 'la montagne d'en face rayonnant sans fin de verdure' which 'dévoilait, sous mille facettes changeantes, sa figure unique', he is required by the master to capture 'les poussées internes, les lignes de force qui *animaient* les choses'.⁶⁸ He, again, senses the *bodily* as well as spiritual relation between man and nature that he has felt during his practice of calligraphy, 'de tout temps à travers ces choses et en correspondance avec elles – les rochers, les arbres, les montagnes, les cours d'eau –, les Chinois expriment leurs états intérieurs, leurs élans charnels aussi bien que leurs aspirations spirituelles'.⁶⁹ For an authentic artistic creation there has to be an authentic projection of the inner, a projection that aims at universal harmony:

En compagnie du maître, j'apprenais donc à observer les choses en leur devenir, à sentir, derrière leurs formes solides, l'invisible flux dynamique à

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 23.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 163. My italics.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 163-64.

l'œuvre. A de rares moments, je ne doutais pas que mes pulsions intimes ne se trouvaient en parfait accord avec les pulsions de l'Univers.⁷⁰

The universe is in constant transformation – such is Cheng's Daoist conviction; and if an authentic aesthetic experience changes man's relation to the world, it is because it transforms our sense of being: 'au terme d'un intense travail quotidien, je sentais qu'un nouvel être émergeait, grandissait en moi'.⁷¹

Tianyi's remark of 'l'invisible flux dynamique à l'œuvre' which is 'derrière leurs formes solides [des choses]' reminds us of Proust's protagonist's observation of that *quelque chose* which is 'derrière ce mouvement, derrière cette clarté' of the 'forme', 'lignes', and 'surface' of the steeples.⁷² Just as the master instructs Tianyi to appreciate the 'life' in things, Proust's protagonist's *analogical* search for the hidden, or what he later formulates as 'rechercher les causes profondes',⁷³ recognizes what is in the self via the recognition of the hidden behind the steeples of Martinville. The protagonist dismisses neither the material reality of the steeples nor the hidden *thing* behind them that 'corresponds' to what is in him. In other words, the protagonist's affective artistic presentation rather than representation does not annihilate – both in the sense of 'reducing to nothing' and 'destroying the soul' – the object of aesthetic experience, which an idolater's practice of appropriation of art does. The relation between what is in him and what is hidden behind the thing constantly undergoes a process of transformation as the protagonist is creating his art. Hannah Freed-Thall has recently argued that the most striking aesthetic experiences in *La Recherche* involve the most ordinary object which

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 164.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Proust, *RTP I*, p. 178.

⁷³ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 445.

‘defies critical appropriation’.⁷⁴ Although the type of aesthetic experience she engages with is predominantly *receptive* and does not seem to include artistic *production*, which is our case here, what her analysis of ‘aesthetic disorientation’ effectively exposes is that there is clearly an asymmetrical pattern between the perception and the reaction of the aestheticizing subject in those striking experiences. This asymmetry, in the case of artistic production, also characterizes the ‘forms’ of ‘equivalent profond’, the relation between the artist’s representation and affective presentation, the authentic relation of the individual to the world.

The delineation of aesthetic territories between the inner and the outer is *transformative* and there is an asymmetrical correspondence between them. This correspondence is a mode of communication, a communion, bodily and spiritual, perpetuated by the creation of works of art. Our real existence, our fundamental sense of being is a relation, as Aubert comments: ‘ce que nous appelons la réalité est en fait un certain rapport, notre rapport aux choses, au monde et que c’est ce dernier qu’il faut chercher à éclaircir, et notamment le lien qui unit vérité et images’.⁷⁵ Hence, Proust affirms: ‘la vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la seule vie par conséquent réellement vécue, c’est la littérature’.⁷⁶

II.3. Primacy of Art

It is no exaggeration when Richard Bales opens his discussion of Proust’s relation to art with the following remark: ‘few authors foreground the arts quite so comprehensively as Proust;

⁷⁴ An obvious example, as the title of Freed-Thall’s article indicates, is the protagonist’s nonsensical interjection ‘zut, zut, zut’ in front of the pond at Montjouvain. See Hannah Freed-Thall, ‘Zut, zut, zut: Aesthetic Disorientation in Proust’, *Modern Language Notes*, 124.4 (2009), 868-900 (p. 869).

⁷⁵ Aubert, *Traduction*, p. 81.

⁷⁶ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 474.

certainly, none made them so central to their own literary production. [...] probably no other work of literature celebrates the arts as totally as his, or is so convincing in his pursuit'.⁷⁷ A firm belief in the primacy of the arts in spiritual life also thoroughly preoccupies Cheng's *Le Dit*, although the apparent difference in scale would inevitably make Cheng's efforts seem small when compared to Proust's. Of course, it is far from the purpose of Cheng's 'démarche proustienne' to match Proust's *La Recherche* in length. Cheng's approach signals, to borrow Bales's words, 'a keen awareness of the literary possibilities of incorporating the arts in the fabric of [his] own work'⁷⁸ – crucially – in the wake of *La Recherche*.

Our previous observations focus on Cheng's critical joining in with Proust's aesthetic theory and his conception of the novel as a *Bildungsroman*. This section will further demonstrate Cheng's artistic ambition to reorient Proust's approach to the arts towards a platform of intercultural communication, by developing Cheng's idea of 'cultural translation' as constructions of cultural, and more specifically artistic, 'parallels' or 'equivalents' from both Western and Eastern heritages.

Concerning the engagement with the arts, perhaps the most obvious novelistic parallels between *Le Dit* and *La Recherche* are found in their respective arrangements of key artist-characters. Just as in Proust where certain artist-characters stimulate the narrator's discussions of the arts, Cheng's four main characters personify different forms of art. This table below schematically summarizes these parallels:

⁷⁷ Richard Bales, 'Proust and the fine arts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007[2001]), pp. 183-99 (p. 183).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 183.

Art forms	Characters in <i>Le Dit</i>	Corresponding characters in <i>La Recherche</i>
Painting	Tianyi (plus calligraphy)	Elstir
Literature	Haolang	Bergotte & the narrator
Theatre	Yumei	Berma & Rachel
Music	Véronique	Morel & Vinteuil

The following sections will selectively compare a number of key passages from both novels for each of the four categories.

II.3.1. Painting

Like the protagonist of *La Recherche*, and perhaps even more similar to Proust himself, Tianyi makes a number of ‘artistic pilgrimages’ in Europe. In addition to Paris, he notably visits Florence and Venice for Italian Renaissance paintings, Amsterdam for Rembrandt and The Hague for Vermeer. Tianyi’s corresponding Proustian character is Elstir in *La Recherche*, whose art most resembles Impressionist aesthetics which inevitably bears many conceptual differences with ancient Chinese art. Nevertheless, Tianyi’s reflections on the similar (re)creative principle of Western paintings to ancient Chinese art resonate with Proust’s protagonist’s enthusiastic discussions of Elstir’s works.

For both Proust’s protagonist and Tianyi, artistic creation imitates the creation of the universe. In fact, the former *reconstitutes* the latter – artistic creation is fundamentally a microcosmic *recreation* of the cosmic orders. Proust’s protagonist first compares Elstir’s studio to

le laboratoire d'une sorte *de nouvelle creation du monde*, où, du *chaos* que sont toutes choses que nous voyons, il avait tiré, en les poignant sur divers rectangles de toile qui étaient posés dans tous les sens, ici une vague de la mer écrasant avec colère sur le sable son écume lilas, là un jeune homme en coutil blanc accoudé sur le pont d'un bateau. Le veston du jeune homme et la vague éblouissante avaient pris *une dignité nouvelle* du fait qu'ils *continuaient à être*, encore que dépourvus de ce en quoi ils passaient pour consister, la vague ne pouvant plus mouiller, ni le veston habiller personne.⁷⁹

The sea, as Jean-Pierre Richard perspicaciously points out, signifies 'le lieu d'origine'⁸⁰ in these passages of *Les Jeunes filles en fleurs*. The artistic image of a man at sea symbolically reflects man's primordial relation to the world, which is renewed and perpetuated ('une dignité nouvelle du fait qu'ils continuaient à être') by Elstir's creation of art. The artist is then directly compared to the divine Creator, 'si Dieu le Père avait créé les choses en les nommant, c'est en leur ôtant leur nom, ou en leur en donnant un autre qu'Elstir les recréait'.⁸¹ The protagonist subsequently applies this aesthetic principle to the subjective reading of the changing faces of the young girls he is in love with, 'qui fait penser à cette perpétuelle recréation des éléments primordiaux de la nature qu'on contemple devant la mer',⁸² which is rephrased again in *Le Temps retrouvé* as 'une création perpétuellement recommencée'.⁸³ As the narrator's aesthetic reflection matures, he realizes that this perpetual artistic recreation not only sustains one's own authentic relation to the world, but also infinitely opens up other possible worlds: 'grâce à l'art, au lieu de voir un seul monde, le nôtre, nous le voyons se multiplier, et autant qu'il y a d'artistes originaux, autant nous avons de mondes à notre disposition, plus différents les uns des autres que ceux qui roulent dans l'infini'.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 190. My italics.

⁸⁰ Jean-Pierre Richard, *Proust et le monde sensible* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), p. 128.

⁸¹ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 191.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 259.

⁸³ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 375.

⁸⁴ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 474.

Moreover, Proust repeatedly emphasizes that in order to create authentic art, artists must take refuge in solitude, keeping a distance from society life or even sacrificing friendship, despite people's contempt for them because of that. Elstir 'vivait dans un isolement, avec une sauvagerie que les gens du monde appelaient de la pose et de la mauvaise éducation, les pouvoirs publics un mauvais esprit, ses voisins de la folie, sa famille de l'égoïsme et de l'orgueil'.⁸⁵ Elstir 'avait vécu pour lui-même',⁸⁶ which Proust later reiterates as 'le devoir' of a real artist, 'or l'amitié est une dispense de ce devoir'.⁸⁷ In some sense, the artist could be characterized as recluse and narcissistic – 'la pratique de la solitude lui en avait donné l'amour'.⁸⁸

The corresponding relation between artistic creation and cosmic creation is made crystal clear in Tianyi's following statement: 'les peintres visaient non pas à imiter les infinies variations du monde créé mais à prendre part aux gestes mêmes de la Création'.⁸⁹ Initially stimulated by his study of Renaissance paintings, Tianyi's general observation of Western art, in some ways, proposes a theory that could shed light on Proust's perception of the artist's creative condition of solitude tinged with narcissism:

Sur fond d'univers objectif, l'homme jouait maintenant le rôle principal. L'univers, tout en participant à l'action de l'homme, était relégué au rôle de décor. [...] je me mettrais dès lors à traquer le long de l'Occident la lignée des peintres qui avaient cherché à restaurer le royaume perdu [...] Commencement de la grandeur. Commencement de la solitude. Plus tard, je comprendrai pourquoi l'Occident était si hanté par le thème du miroir et de Narcisse. Arraché au monde créé, s'élevant en sujet unique, l'homme aimait à se mirer. Après tout, c'était désormais sa seule manière de se voir. Se mirant dans le reflet, il captait sa propre image, et surtout l'image de son pouvoir, nourri d'un esprit affranchi. A force de se contempler et de s'exalter, son regard ainsi exercé n'avait de cesse qu'il ne transformât tout le reste en objet, plus exactement en objet de conquête. Ne reconnaissant

⁸⁵ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 184.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 185.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 260.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 185.

⁸⁹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 232.

plus d'autre sujet autour de lui, il se privait pour longtemps – volontiers? malgré lui? – d'interlocuteurs ou de pairs. Pouvait-il réellement échapper à la conscience aiguë de la solitude et de la mort?⁹⁰

This is another highly condensed passage which necessarily needs unfolding. First, Cheng evidently traces the development of the Western conceptual and perceptive equation of the artist with the Creator to the Renaissance theological turn, according to which man – instead of God – is now the centre of the universe. Cheng implicitly refers to the birth of the modern human subject ('s'érigeant en sujet unique') notably announced by Descartes.

Second, 'le royaume perdu' evokes the biblical fall of man, which is most thoroughly explored in Milton's *Paradise Lost*; and it is the artist's task to 'restaurer' that lost paradise. Although Tianyi does not generically include Proust in his tracking of the line of Western *painters* who endeavour to 'restaurer le royaume perdu', the idea of retrieving a lost paradise through art is intrinsic to Proustian aesthetic and spirituality. Proust's narrator reaffirms at the end of *La Recherche*:

il [le souvenir] nous fait tout à coup respirer un air nouveau, précisément parce que c'est un air qu'on a respiré autrefois, cet air plus pur que *les poètes ont vainement* essayé de faire régner dans *le paradis* et qui ne pourrait donner cette sensation profonde de renouvellement que s'il avait été respiré déjà, car *les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus*.⁹¹

Proust juxtaposes 'les vrais paradis' with 'le paradis'. Incidentally, the latter is capitalized as 'le Paradis' in the Flammarion edition of *La Recherche* directed by Jean Milly, which enhances its specifically Christian reference.⁹² Proust's nuance is crucial because, ultimately, the real lost paradises that artists endeavour to restore are not *the* Paradise of the Bible,

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 231-32.

⁹¹ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 449. My italics.

⁹² Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, ed. by Bernard Brun (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1986), p. 260.

but *many* paradises – ‘la création du monde n’a pas eu lieu une fois pour toutes, [...] elle a nécessairement lieu tous les jours’⁹³ – that are essentially recreated *by* and *in* man.

This ‘artificial’ paradise leads then, according to Cheng, to man’s ‘commencement de la solitude’ and the flourishing of ‘le thème du miroir et de Narcisse’ in Western art. Although Cheng does not cite any specific artistic examples, critics have long observed this paradigmatic shift to self-reflexivity in Western painting, and by extension, Western thought: from what Foucault characterizes as the ‘resembling’ representation to the ‘pure’ representation,⁹⁴ and, arguably, from the Classicist to the Baroque and postmodernist aesthetics; from the ‘mirror’ of the world to that of the self and to the ‘mirror of the mirror’, or what may be called ‘the metanarrative structure of knowledge’. In this respect, Proust’s novel, with its ‘double internal focalisation’ within a first-person narrative as well as the ‘fragment’ of ‘Un Amour de Swann’ seemingly written in the third person, epitomizes the narcissistic game of self-mirroring. To appropriate the narrator-protagonist’s own words, ‘tout tournait autour de moi’.⁹⁵ In fact, Cheng’s work also illustrates such a narrative dynamism – albeit less sophisticated than Proust’s – with the multiple reincarnations of the author himself as the narrator (of the preface), the protagonist, Professors C. and F., and Haolang.⁹⁶

However, for Cheng, Western artistic traditions represent less of an object of exploration than that of cross-cultural translation. His reflection inspired by Renaissance art

⁹³ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 375.

⁹⁴ Foucault bases this observation particularly on his analysis of Vélasquez’s painting *Las Méninas*. He says: ‘jusqu’à la fin du XIV^e siècle, la ressemblance a joué un rôle bâtisseur dans le savoir de la culture occidentale’. And Vélasquez’s work marks ‘la représentation de la représentation classique’, or what Foucault otherwise formulates as ‘la pure représentation’. See Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 31, 32.

⁹⁵ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 6.

⁹⁶ The point about Haolang being the alter ego of Cheng will be properly addressed in Section II.4.2.

is followed by an extensive discussion of Chinese traditional aesthetic theory. He first looks for the Chinese temporal and historic 'equivalent' of the Italian Renaissance because the art 'of his own country', to borrow T.S. Eliot's formulation, 'has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order':⁹⁷ 'je ne crois pas avoir été autant de connivence avec les peintres chinois des Song et des Yuan que dans les musées de Florence et de Venise'.⁹⁸ In doing this, Cheng effectively reorients the preceding European conception of artistic creation towards a Chinese alternative:

Ne répétait-elle pas à la longueur de siècle, cette cosmologie [...] que la Création provient du Souffle primordial, lequel dérive du Vide originel? Ce Souffle primordial se divisant à son tour en souffles vitaux *yin* et *yang* et en bien d'autres a rendu possible la naissance du Multiple. Ainsi reliés, l'Un et le Multiple sont d'un seul tenant. Tirant conséquence de cette conception, les peintres visaient non pas à imiter les infinies variations du monde créé mais à prendre part aux gestes mêmes de la Création. Ils s'ingéniaient à introduire, entre le *yin* et le *yang*, entre les Cinq Éléments, entre les Dix Mille entités vivantes, le Vide médian, seul garant de la bonne marche des souffles organiques, lesquels deviennent esprit lorsqu'ils atteignent la résonance rythmique.⁹⁹

Although both European and Chinese traditions share the aesthetic conception of the artist as creator/Creator, the latter significantly differs from the former in its conceptual independence of the human subject. The Chinese conception, to adapt Cheng's remark on Chinese poetry, 'cherche à laisser parler le paysage et les choses, à laisser transparaître entre les signes un état de communion où l'invisible a sa part'.¹⁰⁰

Yet, the ceaseless and pluralistic recreations of the world through the same primordial principle share a strong affinity with Proust's aesthetic foundation examined earlier. In fact, Cheng's formulation of 'One and Many' ('ainsi reliés, l'Un et le Multiple sont

⁹⁷ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. Second Edition*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company), pp.955-961 (p. 956).

⁹⁸ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 232.

⁹⁹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 232.

¹⁰⁰ Cheng, *Le Dialogue*, Kindle Ebook.

d'un seul tenant') subtly brings together two epistemologically very different aesthetic and cosmological theories. The notion of 'One and Many' is fundamental in Daoist thought, but Cheng conveniently leaves out the numerical significance of 'Two' and 'Three'¹⁰¹ – which would have otherwise made this notion specifically Daoist – *in order that* it resonates with certain Western schools of thought, some of which have been extensively employed to study Proustian aesthetics. Deleuze, for instance, notably applies Neoplatonic concepts to the understanding of Proust's idea of 'essence', especially that found in art:

Le monde enveloppé de l'essence est toujours un commencement du Monde en général, un commencement de l'univers, un commencement radical absolu. [...] Certains néo-platoniciens se servaient d'un mot profond pour désigner l'état originaire qui précède tout développement, tout déploiement, toute "explication": la *complication*, qui enveloppe le multiple dans l'Un et affirme l'Un du multiple.¹⁰²

More recently, the notion of 'One and Many' in Proust has been most systematically examined by Erika Fülöp in *Proust, the One, and the Many*.¹⁰³ She meticulously negotiates these two perspectives in *La Recherche* and formulates them into one coherent structure, by engaging with a range of European philosophers from Schelling to Derrida.

Once again, Cheng's aesthetic reflection has shown compelling evidence of both Western (especially French poststructuralist) and Daoist influences. But perhaps more importantly, this 'comparatist' intellectual and artistic energy channelled through 'cross-fertilization, assimilation, creative adaption, indigenization, translation, and making-new, within and across locally differentiated traditions, through centuries of uneven

¹⁰¹ In short, it concerns the following passage from Chapter XLII of *Laozi*, 'le Tao d'origine engender l'Un / L'Un engender le Deux / Le Deux engender le Trois / Le Trois produit les dix mille êtres.' This translation is provided by Cheng himself. We will return to this passage in the final section of this chapter.

¹⁰² Deleuze, *Signes*, p. 57-58.

¹⁰³ Erika Fülöp, *Proust, the One, and the Many: Identity and Difference in A la recherche du temps perdu* (London: Legenda, 2012).

modernities'¹⁰⁴ has come to define Cheng's literary aesthetic. In this light, Tianyi's Renaissance inspiration is rechanneled literally into a 're-naissance' of art and thought in the present which are preoccupied with a palpable sense of 'to-comeness'. As will be further demonstrated in subsequent analyses, Cheng's 'comparatist' narrative model, which consistently sets up cultural 'parallels' and audaciously constructs 'equivalents' from both Western and Eastern cultural heritages, exemplifies the concept and practice of cultural translation both in form and in content.

II.3.2. Literature

La Recherche provides Cheng with a key formal literary expression of generic hybridity. It is well-known that the blurring and blending of literary genres constitutes a vital force behind the evolution of Proust's novelistic conception, from *Les Plaisirs et les jours*, via *Jean Santeuil* and *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, to *La Recherche*. Proust pushes this generic experiment to such an extreme that he even questions himself if he is a novelist at all in one of his early notebooks: 'suis-je romancier?' As for Cheng, the titles of each part of the novel, namely, 'épopée', 'récit', and 'mythe', already demonstrate his conscious engagement with literary genres. Besides the conceptions of the novel as both a *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman* like *La Recherche*,¹⁰⁵ Cheng deliberately challenges the boundaries between biography, autobiography, and fiction, between essay and novel, between history and literature.

Like Bergotte and the protagonist-narrator in *La Recherche*, Haolang represents the writer and poet in *Le Dit*. The works by Bergotte, who is often thought to be modelled on

¹⁰⁴ I borrow Christine Froula's accurate remark on the Western 'modernist' aesthetics of the early twentieth century. Froula thoroughly explores the Chinese art objects ('china') mentioned in *La Recherche*. See Froula, 'Proust's China', p. 76.

¹⁰⁵ See Section II.1.

Anatole France and Paul Bourget,¹⁰⁶ resemble Decadent literature, which has little stylistic echo in *Le Dit*. It is Proust's narrator's reflection on the writer's role in relation to national politics, especially in times of war and revolution, that finds its Chinese counterpart in *Le Dit*.

Haolang is an ardent advocate of politically engaged literature and he becomes a patriotic poet during wartime:

Sur la foi d'une affiche il alla suivre des cours du soir organisés par d'obscurs intellectuels progressistes. C'est là que la guerre, par miracle, est venue le cueillir. Incorporé dans l'un des groupes artistiques 'Résistance aux Japonais et salut de la patrie', il connut la vie itinérante et puis celle du front. Faisant partie des 'petits', mais entouré d'artistes chevronnés, il découvrit la poésie et se découvrit poète.¹⁰⁷

He follows in the steps of revolutionary left-wing writers such as LU Xun and HU Feng, and is preoccupied with a new Chinese poetic language, 'pour nous secouer, pour nous arracher à la partie dégénérée pourrie, de nos racines'.¹⁰⁸ Literary creation is then seen as born out of collective political urgency rather than spiritual concerns, as Haolang decidedly expresses his stance:

moi, je me range résolument du côté de Lu Xun. L'âme, on l'a ou on ne l'a pas. Si on l'a, on ne l'a perdra pas. Ou alors, c'est au moment où nous nous avisons de la chercher que nous la perdons. Si nous devons renaître, nous renaîtrons. Si nous devons disparaître, acceptons de devenir cendres, d'où naîtra peut-être quelque chose d'autre que nous ignorons. Pour le moment, le salut vient d'ailleurs, de l'étranger.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ See J. Hassine, 'Bergotte', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, pp. 130-132.

¹⁰⁷ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 97. The references to a new language and Lu Xun point to the profound linguistic transition from 'rigid' classical to 'free' modern vernacular Chinese in the context of early-twentieth-century China. Tianyi witnesses the completion of this transition in Haolang and Yumei's letter, 'début 1950, arriva une lettre de Haolang et de Yumei, assez brève, écrite dans une langue nouvelle.' Moreover, the modern vernacular Chinese is shaped by many Chinese intellectuals' deliberate use of 'translationese'. Cheng, *Dit*, p. 239. See also Part I Chapter I *supra*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 96.

Haolang's view of art forms a stark contrast to that of Tianyi, who believes in 'l'aventure de l'âme singulière et à l'errance'.¹¹⁰ In a discussion on the 'ideal society', Tianyi reaffirms the different philosophical implications behind their respective artistic activities:

Instinctivement proche de l'esprit taoïste, j'acceptais plutôt la conception de la création ou de la transformation continue de l'Univers au sein duquel la Terre n'est qu'une halte provisoire. Haolang avançait l'idée que pour le moment il convenait d'aider à détruire l'ordre ancien ; une fois le joug levé, on entrerait dans un autre contexte, et on chercherait à s'épanouir autrement. Je lui faisais alors remarque qu'une telle force d'organisation de la part des révolutionnaires [...]

It is also the experience of war – in this case, the First World War – that 'allowed Proust to reflect on the connections linking literature, history, and politics'.¹¹¹ Proust's eventual criticism of patriotic and revolutionary literature and art is well known:

l'idée d'un art populaire comme d'un art patriotique si même elle n'avait pas été dangereuse, me semblait ridicule. [...] Dès le début de la guerre M. Barrès avait dit que l'artiste (en l'espèce Titien) doit avant tout servir la gloire de sa patrie. Mais il ne peut la servir qu'en étant artiste, [...] N'imitons pas les révolutionnaires qui par « civisme » méprisaient, s'ils ne les détruisaient pas, les œuvres de Watteau et de La Tour, peintres qui honorent davantage la France que tous ceux de la Révolution.¹¹²

The idea of a patriotic art indeed proves to be dangerous and even fatal for Haolang. As the director of the left-wing literary review *Hu Feng* is arrested and accused of being anti-revolutionary for having criticized Mao's over-politicization of art and literature; Haolang, who has contributed to the review, is sent to a 're-education camp'. Later during the Cultural Revolution, he is again absurdly punished by the Red Guards as the 'droitiste le

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Edward J. Hughes, *Proust, Class, and Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 17. In the original passage, Hughes cites Tadié's biography as support. See Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: Biographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), pp. 787, 826.

¹¹² Proust, *RTP IV*, pp. 466-67. Proust himself seems to have experienced an intellectual evolution from political engagement to political indifference, which is the basic line of argument pursued by Hughes.

plus ancien et le plus endurci'¹¹³ for his previous involvement with Hu Feng's left-wing literary review, leading to Haolang's 'death'. Apart from the obvious criticism of the socio-political injustice and absurdity under Mao's regime, Cheng also portrays Haolang as a victim of his own politically engaged poems. For Proust, as well as for Chang, the only real 'patrie' of an artist is 'la patrie intérieure' which proves 'l'existence irréductiblement individuelle de l'âme'.¹¹⁴

However, unlike Proust's narrator's total rejection of patriotic literature, Tianyi towards the end of the novel sees a certain complementarity of Haolang's artistic vision to his own. As Haolang works on his 'petite histoire' and Tianyi on his final portrait of Yumei, Tianyi reflects:

je ressens combien nous sommes différents, combien aussi nous sommes complémentaires. Haolang aura toujours été cet être qui s'arrache de la terre la plus charnelle, qui va droit de l'avant ou qui s'efforce de s'élever vers l'air libre des hauteurs, coûte que coûte, vaille que vaille, fût-ce au prix d'atroces blessures infligées à lui-même et aux autres. Tandis que moi, j'aurai été cet être qui vient d'ailleurs et qui sera perpétuellement choqué par ce qu'offre cette terre. Si en dépit de tout je garde intacte en moi cette capacité d'étonnement et d'émerveillement, c'est que sans cesse je suis porté par les échos d'une très lointaine nostalgie dont j'ignore l'origine.¹¹⁵

If Haolang's poetic ambition entails a rupture with the 'burdensome' tradition in order to create something radically 'new', Tianyi's artistic vision is marked by the constant return to a quasi-mystic origin. For Tianyi, 'la vraie vie est un simple retour',¹¹⁶ and in contrast to Haolang's indifference to spiritual discourses of art, Tianyi is convinced that 'seule une vision mythique permettrait aux hommes de prendre en charge ce qu'ils ne parviennent pas à dire entièrement. Qui d'entre nous peut prétendre cerner la vraie vie, savoir jusqu'où

¹¹³ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 407.

¹¹⁴ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 761.

¹¹⁵ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 372.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 224.

elle plonge ses racines et étend ses ramures?’¹¹⁷ If Tianyi’s, and by extension Cheng’s, literary aesthetic can be described as ‘revolutionary’, it is ‘revolutionary’ in the Proustian sense, as Antoine Compagnon explains:

[...] en littérature les révolutions ne vont pas toujours vers l’avant, [...] il peut y avoir des révolutions en arrière, à rebours pour ainsi dire. Le sens de la ‘révolution’ proustienne aurait été celui-là, le rattachant à la grande tradition classique, racinienne en particulier, de l’étude des sentiments et des passions, par-dessus le roman qui, depuis Flaubert, sacrifiait l’intelligence à la sensation.¹¹⁸

Indeed, Cheng’s ‘revolutionary’ aesthetic revisits *two* great cultural heritages instead of one, creating something ‘new’, or indeed, ‘old’.

II.3.3. Theatre

Both Proust and Cheng’s engagement with theatre may appear proportionally less significant than literature and painting. Theatrical art is nevertheless relevant to both protagonists’ own artistic revelation and vocation and theatrical references permeate both novels. Racine is still one of the most cited writers in *La Recherche*; Yumei or *l’Amante*, personifying theatrical art, is still the pivotal character of *Le Dit*, who inspires Tianyi’s final artistic creation.

Tianyi’s ‘comparatist’ observation of theatre in *Le Dit* registers yet another important artistic transition in modern Chinese history owing to Western influence:

Il s’agissait du ‘théâtre parlé’, c’est-à-dire à l’occidentale, qui diffère du théâtre ancien en ce que ce dernier comporte outre le dialogue parlé le chant, le mime et l’acrobatie. Dans le théâtre moderne, on ne trouve plus les masques, les accessoires, ni l’ensemble des gestes symboliques qui permettent à l’acteur, sur une scène presque vide, de tirer à lui l’espace et

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 373.

¹¹⁸ Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. 27.

le temps, de se jouer d'eux. Le drame se déroule dans un décor réaliste, sur une durée déterminée.¹¹⁹

However, instead of elaborating on Western or Western-style theatre, Cheng's discussion almost exclusively focuses on classical Chinese theatre. This aesthetic preference is hardly surprising. Like Haolang's 'revolutionary' poetic language, the 'théâtre parlé', also known in Chinese as *huaju* ('spoken drama'), at the turn of the twentieth century, has its own political agenda:

La guerre avait fait affluer de toute la Chine un grand nombre d'écrivains, d'artistes et de comédiens vers quelques villes de l'arrière [...] Une majorité d'entre eux, pour ne pas dire la totalité, étaient de gauche ou de tendance 'progressive' ; leur propos n'était pas d'amuser. Les uns s'attaquaient directement aux problèmes actuels, d'autres abordaient les grands thèmes, tous étaient conscients de participer à un moment exceptionnel et de préparer la renaissance de la culture chinoise.¹²⁰

Both Cheng and Proust's relative detachment with regard to contemporary politics give an edge to their appetite for classical theatre. Just as La Berma plays the heroine in Racine's *Phèdre*, Yumei performs the *Legend of the White Snake* (*baishe zhuan*, 白蛇传) in the Sichuan opera. In addition to their shared theatrical genre of tragedy revolving around *l'amour impossible*, there is even a certain 'temporal parallel' between the two pieces. Like Racine's French Classicist re-composition of Euripides's play from Greek antiquity, the earliest written piece of *White Snake* was also published in the seventeenth century, with a long tradition of oral circulation preceding it.¹²¹

But it would be difficult to talk about *Phèdre/La Recherche* and *White Snake/Le Dit* in interdiegetic terms (as we will do with the myth of Orpheus in a later section). Neither

¹¹⁹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 108.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 108-9.

¹²¹ Its earliest printed form is found in a collection of stories entitled 'Stories to Caution the World' (*Jingshi tongyan*, 警世通言) compiled by FENG Menglong (冯梦龙 1574-1646). Various theatrical adaptations of *White Snake* become popular from the Mid-Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) onwards.

Proust nor Cheng seems to systemically engage with the *plots* of *Phèdre* and *White Snake*. It is the theatricality, the aesthetic performance of the two actresses in particular, that is at the heart of Proust and Cheng's theatrical observations. In this respect, Cheng's *démarche proustienne* manifests itself in the affinity between Tianyi's admiring description of Yumei's performance and Proust's portrayal of la Berma, especially at the protagonist's second attendance of la Berma's performance of *Phèdre* at the Opéra.¹²²

In a strikingly similar fashion, at the appearances of la Berma and Yumei on stage, both protagonists exclaim 'miracle':

[Proust's protagonist:] *Ô miracle*, comme ces leçons que nous nous sommes vainement épuisés à apprendre le soir et que nous *retrouvons* en nous, [...] comme aussi ces visages des morts que les efforts passionnés de notre mémoire poursuivent sans les *retrouver* [...] sont là devant nos yeux.¹²³

[Tianyi:] *Miracle*, c'est pourtant le seul mot que tout le souffle qui m'animait à cet instant parvint à murmurer. *Miracle*, ma première rencontre avec Yumei dans le jardin au détour d'un sentier. *Miracle*, ces *retrouvailles*.¹²⁴

From disappointment to revelation, Proust's protagonist learns how to appreciate la Berma's talent in an 'impersonal' way, i.e. without any preconceived ideas that would demand – in vain – the performance to answer 'une impression individuelle'.¹²⁵ La Berma's acting is marked by a certain transparency, like 'une fenêtre qui donne sur un chef-d'œuvre'.¹²⁶ The spectators are not fascinated by la Berma the person, but 'une donnée de

¹²² Proust's protagonist's first disappointing experience with la Berma's performance – due to the discrepancy between la Berma's interpretation of *Phèdre* and the way he imagines those familiar lines to be delivered – is 'unparalleled' in *Le Dit*. Whereas Proust overall tends to highlight Racine's poetic genius and prioritize the 'côté de l'écriture' of theatre, Cheng hardly fleshes out the connection between theatre and literature or painting like Proust. See J. Guérin, 'Théâtre', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, pp. 997-1000 (p. 999).

¹²³ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 347.

¹²⁴ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 138.

¹²⁵ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 349.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 347.

la vie'.¹²⁷ The actress's body, voice, attitude, gesture, veil incarnate (in the etymological sense of 'making flesh') the verses; and her brilliant interpretation makes all the external accessories 'translucides' – instead of 'cacher' the *spirit* of the masterpiece; they make it shine, 'refracter plus richement le rayon central'.¹²⁸

Impersonality, on the other hand, has always been an important aesthetic in classical Chinese theatre. Brecht, for example, has famously explored this aspect of traditional Chinese acting to support his concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*.¹²⁹ But Tianyi's aesthetic appreciation of Yumei's theatrical performance is initially caught between an impersonal interpretation of Madame White Snake and his passion for the actress, who is subsequently described as 'une vraie artiste en possession de tous ses moyens, capable d'exprimer tant de passions obscures':

Yumei était entièrement maquillée selon les règles du théâtre, portant une coiffe richement ornée. Son visage peint, qui représentait la beauté idéale de la femme chinoise, *pour impersonnel qu'il fût*, comment n'en aurais-je pas reconnue tous les *traits maintes fois imaginés dans mes rêves* durant toutes ces années d'absence: ce parfait ovale, ce nez fin, ces lèvres sensibles et sensuelles, ce regard profond et limpide. [...] une voix plus mûre, un port plus souverain.¹³⁰

Nevertheless, in the end, it is the genius of the theatrical work of art itself that triumphs:

Yumei is 'absorbée dans son rôle'; Tianyi '[se laisse] absorber, [lui] aussi, par l'histoire, dans l'oubli total de soi'; and Haolang is 'figé par l'émotion, comme hypnotisé'.¹³¹

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 348.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Interestingly, in his essay, Brecht is actually trying to adapt the Chinese actor's *Verfremdungseffekt*, as 'a transportable piece of technique [...] loosely pried from the Chinese theatre', and to apply it to 'revolutionary' theatre. See Bertolt Brecht, 'Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting (1936)', trans. by John Willett, in *Theatre in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology*, ed. by David Krasner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 178-184 (p. 181).

¹³⁰ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 139. My italics.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

II.3.4. Music

Both Proust and Cheng place special emphasis on the *affective* aspect of music. Music's apparent lack of external referent and its absolute self-referentiality somewhat paradoxically endow this medium with a tremendous evocative power to express sentiment and desire, to project natural landscapes, and to be easily infused with other artistic media. In Proust's case, the profound influence of Schopenhauer's philosophical aesthetics – according to which music is the most supreme of all the arts – is undeniable.¹³² In Schopenhauer's own words,

Music is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole Will as the world itself is [...] music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the Will itself*, the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence.¹³³

Music, as Ulrich Pothast further explains, 'needs no translation or explanation whatsoever for being "understood" by everybody'.¹³⁴

Without explicitly acknowledging Schopenhauer's philosophy anywhere in Cheng's *œuvre*, Tianyi's initial contact with Western music, nonetheless, leaves traces of this Schopenhauerian as well as Proustian characterization of music. Tianyi first remarks that music enjoys a different mode of transmission: 'si la littérature et la peinture nous étaient plus ou moins accessibles par la traduction et la reproduction, la musique nous demeurerait

¹³² See F. Leriche, 'Musique', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, ed. by Annick Bouillaguet and Bryan Rogers (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), pp. 664-66.

¹³³ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation I*, tr. by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), p. 257. Italics in the original. For a detailed analysis of Schopenhauer's influence on Proust, see Anne Henri, *Marcel Proust: Théories pour une esthétique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1981).

¹³⁴ Ulrich Pothast, *The Metaphysical Vision: Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Art and Life and Samuel Beckett's Own Way to Make Use of It* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 64.

quasiment inconnue'.¹³⁵ The foreign Western music is not 'translated' to be 'understood' by Tianyi and Haolang, it directly *intrudes* into their inner sense of being: 'ce premier concert de notre vie fut d'autant plus mémorable qu'il fut marqué par l'intrusion inopinée – ou miraculeusement opportune – du Dehors'.¹³⁶

What follows then is not only a typical Chengian cross-cultural reflection on this medium of art, but, more importantly, the appreciation of music is analogically expressed through man's bodily relation to the natural landscape:

[...] tant nous étions exaltés. La musique chinoise, retenue et confidentielle, souvent plaintive, ne nous avait guère habitués à ce chant [*La Symphonie pastorale* de Beethoven] aux accents si souverains, si conquérants. Celui-ci n'accompagne pas la nature ; il en *déchire la peau, en transperce la chair pour en devenir la pulsation même*. Ce que cette symphonie évoque, ce sont certes *les champs de blé et les pâturages de la lointaine Europe*. Comme elle était proche cependant du *battement de cœur* de ces deux marcheurs perdus dans la nuit de Chine! Répondant à nos pas cadencés, les *rizières en terrasses, inondées de lune, bruyantes de coassements de grenouilles*, semblaient s'élargir de rond en rond dans un formidable déploiement rythmique.¹³⁷

Moreover, the immediacy of music to the inward human auditory sensation activates cross-cultural imaginings. Music blends freely with other artistic media, without 'translation'. In short, music transcends cultural boundaries:

Curieusement, cette musique si lointaine, si 'étrangère', me fut d'emblée proche, aussi proche que certains morceaux chinois anciens. Si différence il y avait, c'était sans doute que dans le mouvement lent qui se jouait là, avant chaque retour du motif, il y avait comme un terrible arrachement et du retour fit naître en moi l'image d'un voyageur qui retourne au pays après une long absence, telle qu'elle est maintes fois décrite dans la poésie chinoise.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 90.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 91. My Italics.

¹³⁸ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 92.

Cheng then goes on to elaborate the topos of *jinxiang qingqie* (近乡情怯) – i.e. the complex feelings that come over travellers when they are returning home – many a time articulated in ancient Chinese poetry. As can be seen, what Tianyi's appreciation of music entails is the birth of images and poetry, and more fundamentally, the birth of meaning.

The birth of meaning through music is precisely what marks Proust's devising of 'la petite phrase' in *Un Amour de Swann*. This has been most thoroughly explored by Richard, as the critic argues:

Voudra-t-on retrouver, rassemblées en un objet unique, la plupart de ces images de la signification découverte? On songera à la petite phrase de Vinteuil, [...] Voilà bien en effet un objet d'une certaine manière exemplaire puisque [...] il se donne aussi, de par la façon même dont il se manifeste, comme un chiffre, une active figuration de la naissance, et de la naissance du sens.¹³⁹

For the purpose of comparison, it would be useful to cite one example (out of many) from *La Recherche* to illustrate Proust's 'landscaped' representation of music, particularly in relation to human desire:

Sous l'agitation des trémolos de violon qui la protégeaient de leur tenue frémissante à deux octaves de là – et *comme dans un pays de montagne, derrière l'immobilité apparente et vertigineuse d'une cascade, on aperçoit, deux cents pieds plus bas, la forme minuscule d'une promeneuse* – la petite phrase venait d'apparaître, lointaine, gracieuse, protégée par le long déferlement du rideau transparent, incessant et sonore. Et Swann, *en son cœur, s'adressa à elle comme à une confidente de son amour, comme à une amie d'Odette* [...] ¹⁴⁰

Similar to Tianyi's poetic imagination inspired by Dvorak's music, the composition of Vinteuil's septet in *La Prisonnière* is described in the language of the visual arts:

[...] c'était le créateur [Vinteuil] qui le conduisait lui-même, puisant dans *les couleurs* qu'il venait de trouver une joie éperdue qui lui donnait la puissance de découvrir, [...] comme au choc d'une étincelle quand le

¹³⁹ See Richard, *Monde sensible*, pp. 181-89 (p. 181).

¹⁴⁰ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 260. My italics.

sublime naissait de lui-même [...] tandis qu'il *peignait sa grande fresque musicale*, comme *Michel-Ange attaché à son échelle et lançant, la tête en bas, de tumultueux coups de brosse au plafond de la chapelle Sixtine*.¹⁴¹

Vinteuil's music also constantly evokes Elstir's painting.¹⁴²

Music's evocative power reaches its apotheosis when it is identified with beloved ones. While Swann, 'en son cœur, s'adressa à elle [la petite phrase de Vinteuil] comme à une confidente de son amour', Tianyi, listening to Dvorak's music, cannot help thinking of the three women of his life, 'l'écoutant, je me laissais porter par la vague d'émotion, celle qui me faisait sentir que d'un instant à l'autre j'allais retrouver les êtres chers qui m'attendaient : ma mère, ma sœur, l'Amante...'¹⁴³ Later in Paris, it is also in listening to Pierre Fournier's interpretation of Dvorak's concerto that Tianyi encounter his 'second love', the clarinettist Véronique. Swann falls in love with 'la petite phrase' and then with Odette – only through his subsequent identification of the latter with the former. Likewise, Tianyi's desire for Véronique is first motivated by his enthusiasm for music concerts. Before saying goodbye to Véronique after their first meeting, Véronique hands Tianyi 'un prospectus annonçant un concert de musique de chambre auquel elle participerait'. On the way home, a nascent desire takes place in Tianyi: 'lorsque par hasard je plongeai la main dans ma poche et que je touchai le bout de papier plié, j'éprouvai au bout des doigts une douceur intime, proche du ravissement, un délice si intense qu'il me traversa le cœur comme un jet de feu'.¹⁴⁴ But it is not exactly a desire for Véronique, because when Tianyi tries to remember Véronique's face on the same evening, 'le visage recherché devenait flou'.¹⁴⁵ Reminiscent of Swann's frequent visits to the Verdurins' in order to see Odette, the concert hall becomes *the* meeting point where Tianyi and Véronique found their 'amitié

¹⁴¹ Proust, *RTP III*, p. 759. My italics.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* p. 762.

¹⁴³ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 92.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 258.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 259.

amoureuse’, as Tianyi ‘pri[t] l’habitude d’assister à tous ses concerts et de la raccompagner’.¹⁴⁶

An aesthetic as well as conceptual affinity between Proust and Cheng has become more and more evident: the enchanting, sentimental – and irrational? – quality intrinsic to music seems to be particularly identified with the feminine. Proust thus describes Swann’s perception of ‘la petite phrase’:

Il y a dans le violon [...] des accents qui lui sont si communs avec certaines voix de *contralto*, qu’on a l’illusion qu’une *chanteuse* s’est ajoutée au concert. [...] mais, par moments, on est encore trompé par l’appel décevant de la *sirène*; parfois aussi on croit entendre un génie captif [...] ¹⁴⁷

The ‘feminine mystery’ is further enhanced by the mythological reference to the aquatic woman in this passage, which, as Richard acutely points out, is linked to ‘la ligne de plusieurs séries thématiques très actives’ in *La Recherche*:

Ainsi la série des poissons (poisson-souvenir sous l’herbe de Méséglise), des poissons-femmes (dîneuses de Rivebelle), des poissons offerts par des femmes (la belle pêcheuse de Carqueville); ou la série encore de l’émergence maritime (corps féminin sorti de la vague, tout comme en sortent aussi des phrases mélodiques: ainsi dans le concert sur le quai de Balbec); ou la série du retrait, de l’appel lointain et séducteur (ainsi, et encore, notre petite phrase dans le tableau de Pieter de Hooch). Revoici surgir enfin, lié à la sirène, tout le groupe des êtres incarcérés et des âmes captives.¹⁴⁸

Tianyi questionably relates his ‘musical’ episode with Véronique to the possibility of a fundamental understanding of a feminine being: ‘combien déjà, à la lumière de cet épisode et de l’expérience d’une vie commune, je mesurais la difficulté qu’il y avait à toucher la vraie profondeur d’un autre, *a fortiori* un autre féminin’. Rather coincidentally,

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 260-61.

¹⁴⁷ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 341. My italics.

¹⁴⁸ Richard, *Monde sensible*, p. 187.

Tianyi's appreciation of Véronique's music also ends with an aquatic image of an abandoned child listening to the woman's song by the sea:

L'homme taraudé par le fini, s'échine à rejoindre la femme, envahie par l'infini, sans jamais y parvenir. Il lui reste à demeurer cet enfant abandonné qui pleure au bord de l'océan. L'homme s'apaiserait s'il consentait à écouter seulement la musique qui résonne là, en lui et hors de lui – d'écouter humblement la femme devenue un chant trop nostalgique pour être accessible.¹⁴⁹

There is no explicit mythological reference in this passage, but it should be pointed out that Cheng's association of men with the finite and women with the infinite is nevertheless informed by the Daoist *yin-yang* configuration of sexuality. The 'Mysterious Female' or the 'Esoteric Feminine' is a key theme in Chapter Six of *Laozi*, and in the *Book of Changes*, water, one of the Five Elements (*wuxing*, 五行), is classified as *yin* and feminine *par excellence*.¹⁵⁰

Despite the Daoist influence on Cheng's vision of the world, Cheng's true religion is art, and this is a vital aspect of Cheng's spiritual connection to Proust. The religion of art in Proust has been most thoroughly explored by Barbara J. Bucknall.¹⁵¹ My analysis has focused on aspects of Cheng's artistic discourses that 'speak to' Proustian spirituality. Throughout the analysis, we have seen a thought-provoking convergence of cross-cultural ideas of art and literature in Cheng's work. Proust's *La Recherche* is a point of departure from which Cheng constructs his own platform of intercultural communication. Perhaps Cheng reorients the artistic aspect of Proustian spirituality further in the sense that he understands the highest and most sacred achievement of art as creating 'dialogues' – dialogues between cultures, art and nature, the self and others – aiming at 'transcendence' and universal harmony.

¹⁴⁹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 265.

¹⁵⁰ For an overview of the Five Elements and their corresponding degree of *yin* and *yang*, see R. H. van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), p. 40.

¹⁵¹ Barbara J. Bucknall, *The Religion of Art in Proust* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1969).

Bucknall, in the last three chapters of her book, moves on from the examination of individual artistic media to that of religious language, belief, and structure in Proust. She even extends her discussion of Proust's religion of art to elements of Eastern thought, notably Buddhism, in her final chapter. Our next section follows a similar line of enquiry, exploring Cheng's mythical or mythological engagement with Western traditions epitomized in Proust's work.

II.4. Writing and Rewriting the Myth

Cheng's intention to devise a mythological structure for *Le Dit* is self-evident. The tripartite narrative – 'épopée du départ', 'récit d'un détour', and 'mythe du retour' – is not only reminiscent of such Homeric epics as the *Odyssey*, it is also meant to reflect the *ternary* system fundamental in the Daoist, and to certain extent, Confucian cosmogonies. Cheng in the interview appended to the Chinese translation of *Le Dit* clarifies: 'Chinese thought is ternary, for example, the Confucian tenet of 'sky-earth-man', the Taoist 'Yin-Yang-Qi'.¹⁵² He elsewhere cites the Daoist classic text *Laozi* to highlight the significance of the number 'three':

Le Tao d'origine engendre l'Un
L'Un engendre le Deux
Le Deux engendre le Trois
Le Trois produit les dix mille êtres.¹⁵³

Apart from the structure, explicit references to both Chinese and Western myths and folklore permeate *Le Dit*. Cheng is attracted to comparative mythology, especially

¹⁵² Cheng, 'Zhongxi hebi', p. 317. 中国思想体系是三元的，比如儒家的“天地人”，道家的“阴阳充气”。

¹⁵³ This is Cheng's own translation of Chapter XLII of *Laozi*, cited in Cheng, *Vide et plein*, p. 59. We will return to this ternary way of thinking as the way to understand Cheng's enterprise of creating intercultural dialogues for cultural 'transcendence' in detail in the final section of this chapter.

because the universal and symbolic dimensions of myths, often unbound by time and space, nurture his ambition for cultural transcendence, as Pierre Albouy comments: 'les mythes offrent ainsi des images particulièrement riches des *situations* qui se retrouvent dans toute société humaine, ils fournissent encore les images idéales des individus qui affrontent et dénouent ces situations et qui sont les *héros*'.¹⁵⁴

Proust's passion for myths and mythologies needs no more proof. It is a field of Proust studies that has been under close scrutiny for many decades and continues to fascinate Proust scholars today.¹⁵⁵ However, perhaps with the exception of *The Arabian Nights*, Proust's mythological references – encyclopaedic though they are – are almost exclusively drawn from the Western heritage, i.e. Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian, and medieval traditions. This is precisely where Cheng's 'twofold' mythological engagement with Proust comes into full operation, where his literary aesthetic of reorientation and *rapprochement* manifests itself. The following analysis will first focus on Cheng's writing and rewriting of the mythological elements found in the prologue of *La Recherche* and then compare Cheng's and Proust's respective treatments of the theme of Orpheus. Once again, Proust is Cheng's aesthetic departure rather than destination. Cheng does not engage with Proust's individual mythological references *per se*; rather, they constitute a literary model that reformulates and reincarnates established Western myths, a model which Cheng conveniently adapts to accommodate Chinese myths.

¹⁵⁴ Pierre Albouy, *Mythes et mythologies dans la littérature française* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969), p. 10. Italics in the original.

¹⁵⁵ To name but a few book-length studies from the fifties to now: Eliott Coleman's *The Golden Angel, Papers on Proust* (1954), Claude Vallée's *La Féerie de Marcel Proust* (1958), David Mendelson's *Le Verre et les objets de verre dans l'univers imaginaire de Marcel Proust* (1968), Richard Bales's *Proust and the Middle Ages* (1975), Marie Miguët-Ollagnier's *La Mythologie de Marcel Proust* (1982), and more recently, two works by Margaret Topping, *Proust's Gods* (2000) and *Supernatural Proust* (2007). See the general bibliography for details.

II.4.1. Prologue

It is not the first time in the course of the present thesis that we study the attempt to imitate or rewrite (at least elements of) the prologue of *La Recherche*. We have explored in Part I Chapter II Yu's stylistic and thematic appropriations of Proust's prologue and discussed how Yu's perception of Proust's work, like Wang and Wei, is decidedly influenced by André Maurois's preface which considers time and memory to be the two central themes of *La Recherche*. In comparison, Cheng's engagement with the prologue demonstrates his additional awareness of the deeper mythological structure that permeates Proust's work.

Le Dit begins with a sentence that carries biblical overtones: 'au commencement il y eut ce cri dans la nuit'.¹⁵⁶ Cheng turns the biblical 'void' and 'darkness' on earth into a cry in the night, which thus takes on other overtones. As mentioned before, Cheng's special emphasis on a primordial *sound* is connected to his association between *voie* and *voix*, which corresponds to the double signification of the Chinese 'Dao' referring both to 'the way' and 'to say' (and hence 'le *dit* de Tianyi').¹⁵⁷ More subtly, sound declares the existence of the soul. In Cheng's prologue, 'ce cri', like an incantation ('une sorte de mélodie à mots répétés' with 'échos immémoriaux'), is chanted by the widow to call upon the wandering soul of her husband.¹⁵⁸ In fact, the soul exists *as* sound for Cheng, as he writes elsewhere: 'une voix vient nous murmurer à l'oreille que pourtant l'âme pose problème, puisque d'aucuns nient tout simplement son existence! [...] Se faire entendre et résonner, c'est sa manière d'être'. Significantly, Cheng cites the phrase from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Les Sonnets*

¹⁵⁶ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁷ Elaborations on the special immaterial quality of sound are not absent in Daoism, but they have not necessarily been granted a central position in the traditional understandings of Daoism. Major references can be found in *Zhuangzi* (Chapter XIV) and numerous references to music in *Liezi*. *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi* are all fundamental Daoist texts.

¹⁵⁸ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 15.

à *Orphée*, 'Chanter, c'est être'.¹⁵⁹ Thus, the theme of Orpheus is subtly implied on the first page of the novel. Although Cheng's incipit itself sounds hardly Proustian, Proust does mention the biblical story of Adam and Eve on the first pages of *La Recherche*: 'quelquefois, comme Ève naquit d'une côte d'Adam, une femme naissait pendant mon sommeil d'une fausse position de ma cuisse'.¹⁶⁰ Incidentally, this mysterious and ambiguous feminine presence in the prologue is a feature shared by Proust's, Cheng's, and Yu's works.

Cheng's elaboration on the Chinese ritual, namely, the reincarnation of the wandering soul ('âme errante') echoes Proust's protagonist's mention of the 'métempsychose' on the first page of *La Recherche* as well as his imagination of the Celtic belief towards the end of the prologue. Without knowing the ritual taking place next door, Tianyi light-heartedly answers the summoning voice: 'Oui, je viens; oui, je viens', which angers the adults of the family who shout at Tianyi and his sister: 'Tais-toi! Tais-toi! [...] Couchez-vous maintenant! On vous croyait déjà au lit!'¹⁶¹ The act of answering that voice results in the transmigration of souls:

La bougie une fois éteinte, dans le noir, je ne trouvai pas le sommeil. Je réussis à capter quelques paroles échangées entre les grandes personnes, à travers lesquelles je finis par saisir à peu près ce qui était en jeu. La femme qui criait venait de perdre son mari. Cette nuit, elle appelait l'âme errante du mort afin que celle-ci ne s'égarât pas. Selon le rituel, après avoir brûlé des papiers-monnaies destinés aux morts, au moment précis de la troisième veille, la veuve commence son appel. Si par hasard quelqu'un d'entre les vivants répond 'oui' à cet appel, il perd son corps dans lequel s'introduit l'âme errante du mort, lequel, du coup, réintègre le monde vivant. Tandis que l'âme de celui qui perd ainsi son corps devient errante à son tour. Elle erre jusqu'à ce qu'elle trouve un autre corps pour se réincarner. [...] Et moi, je me voyais perdant mon corps, déjà mort!¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Cheng, *Beauté*, p. 56. I thank Prof. Joachim Gentz for pointing out that Rilke's original remark in German is 'Gegang ist Dasein', and the choice of the French word 'être' instead of 'existence' in the translation used by Cheng already has an enhanced ontological implication, which suits even better Cheng's elaboration on 'soul' and 'sound' here.

¹⁶⁰ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 4.

¹⁶¹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 16.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

The first sentence of the cited passage is evocative of Proust's protagonist's situation in the prologue of *La Recherche*: 'à peine ma bougie éteinte [...] la pensée qu'il était temps de chercher le sommeil m'éveillait'.¹⁶³ The protagonist later ascribes his initial unintelligible experience of metempsychosis to the Celtic belief as follows:

Je trouve très raisonnable la croyance celtique que les âmes de ceux que nous avons perdus sont captives dans quelque être inférieur, dans une bête, un végétal, une chose inanimée, perdues en effet pour nous jusqu'au jour, qui pour beaucoup ne vient jamais, où nous nous trouvons passer près de l'arbre, entrer en possession de l'objet qui est leur prison. Alors elles tressaillent, nous appellent, et sitôt que nous les avons reconnues, l'enchantement est brisé. Délivrées par nous, elles ont vaincu la mort et reviennent vivre avec nous.¹⁶⁴

The Chinese superstition and the Celtic belief may seem, at first glance, worlds apart. A close examination does however reveal that Cheng's and Proust's accounts share a similar 'pattern' of perception and conception. In both ritualistic accounts, the soul calls upon us and requires an answer or recognition, so that it can return from the world of the dead to that of the living. The two souls – one *errante/égarée* and the other *captive* – are examples of transmigration. Just like the little Tianyi's conviction of his own death, Proust's protagonist later observes in retrospect: 'depuis mon enfance j'étais déjà mort bien des fois'.¹⁶⁵

Both protagonists palpably feel and experience the separation between the soul and the body. Tianyi sees himself losing his own body ('Et moi, je me voyais perdant mon corps, déjà mort!') and concludes at the end of the prologue:

Je me sentis tout d'un coup étranger à moi-même : j'avais conscience que mon corps antérieur avait été pris par quelqu'un, et ce corps étendu là, presque inerte, que je pouvais éventuellement tâter de la main, était celui

¹⁶³ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 44.

¹⁶⁵ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 615.

d'un autre, auquel mon âme s'était, coûte que coûte, accrochée. [...] c'était une âme égarée qui logeait comme elle pouvait dans un corps d'emprunt. Tout chez moi, depuis, sera toujours décalé. Jamais les choses ne pourront coïncider tout à fait.¹⁶⁶

The 'âme errante' adds to our understanding of Cheng's description of the writing process of *Le Dit* as a 'spiritual journey' in the Chinese preface.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, Proust's protagonist also puts special emphasis on the discordance between his 'esprit'/'pensée' and his body.¹⁶⁸ While his mind in half-sleep travels 'à toute vitesse dans le temps et dans l'espace',¹⁶⁹ his body is confined to a room and surrounded by furniture:

*Mon esprit s'agitait pour chercher, sans y réussir, à savoir où j'étais, tout tournait autour de moi dans l'obscurité, les choses, les pays, les années. Mon corps, trop engourdi pour remuer, cherchait, [...] à repérer la position de ses membres pour en induire la direction du mur, la place des meubles, pour reconstruire et pour nommer la demeure où il se trouvait.*¹⁷⁰

The protagonist continues to address his body in third person as though it were a different entity, 'sa mémoire, la mémoire de ses côtes, de ses genoux, de ses épaules, lui présentait successivement plusieurs des chambres où il avait dormi, tandis qu'autour de lui les murs invisibles, [...] lui, – mon corps, – se rappelait pour chacun le genre du lit'.¹⁷¹

The image of 'childhood terror' – a point we have already treated in relation to Yu's appropriation of Proust's prologue – is resurrected in both Proust's and Cheng's account. Proust's protagonist remarks:

¹⁶⁶ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁷ See Section I.3.

¹⁶⁸ Although Proust in the following passage does not exactly use the word 'âme', one should note that the protagonist's ideas of soul and metempsychosis are closely associated with 'pensée' and 'esprit', as he says on the opening page of the prologue, 'comme après la métempsychose les pensées d'une existence antérieure'. Proust, *RTP I*, p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 6. My italics.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* My italics.

J'avais rejoint sans effort un âge à jamais révolu de ma vie primitive, retrouvé telle de mes terreurs enfantines comme celle que mon grand-oncle me tirât par mes boucles et qu'avait dissipée le jour – date pour moi d'une ère nouvelle – où on les avait coupées.¹⁷²

The terror of being forced to have one's hair ('boucles') cut is transformed into that of having one's *head* cut in *Le Dit*, as Tianyi associates his own 'transmigrated' death with his previous experience of witnessing the capital execution of a 'revolutionary bandit', 'j'apprenais déjà, à ce moment-là, qu'il ne fallait surtout pas se laisser mordre par la tête fraîchement coupée. Car celui qui est mordu remplacera le mort; il mourra et le mort reviendra vivant'.¹⁷³

The significance of Proust's evocation of the Celtic belief in the prologue is often overlooked, probably because there is only one such occurrence in the entire novel and therefore a lack of cross references to suggest Proust's deeper engagement with Celtic myths. However, as Miguet-Ollagnier points out, this Celtic reference, despite its singular occurrence, is consistently present in all versions of the madeleine passage, and the legend is similarly presented in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* without being specifically qualified as 'Celtic':

Il y a là [...] un « fonds invariable » de la pensée proustienne car depuis le 8^e cahier, dans toutes les rédactions de l'épisode de la madeleine (d'abord pain grillé) nous trouvons mentionnée la croyance en l'âme captive en un objet matériel. La préface du *Contre Sainte-Beuve* la présente de cette façon sans faire référence à un corpus de croyances celtiques.¹⁷⁴

There is more at stake than finding out whether Proust is a *grand amateur* of Celtic culture.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Proust, *RTP I*, p. 4.

¹⁷³ Cheng, *Dit*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷⁴ Miguet-Ollagnier, *Mythologie*, p. 268. The critic is recapitulating J. -F. Reille's observation. See also J. -F. Reille, *Proust: Le Temps du désir* (Paris: Éditions français réunis, 1979), p. 96.

¹⁷⁵ The new Pléiade edition of *La Recherche* notes that Proust may have come across this Celtic legend from Michelet's *Histoire de la France*. Miguet-Ollagnier also suggests that there is a resurgence of interest in Celtic myths at the end of the nineteenth and the

Firstly, this Celtic myth offers a valuable system of belief, a form of ritual that *complements* Proust's aesthetic foundation.¹⁷⁶ It elucidates the strong sense of animism in the protagonist's perception of the aestheticized object, which we have explored in earlier sections. The acknowledgement of the soul trapped in the tree ('nous nous trouvons passer près de l'arbre, entrer en possession de l'objet qui est leur prison') echoes the protagonist's later observation of the brightened lines and surfaces of the steeples of Martinville:

'comme si elles avaient été *une sorte d'écorce*, se déchirèrent, un peu de ce qui m'était caché en elles m'*apparut*'.¹⁷⁷ We can now understand that which is hidden behind the aestheticized object as an *âme*, and the protagonist's vocation not as God's 'calling' but that of a soul who communicates with his own. Thus, what 'appears' to the writer-to-be protagonist is not just the *appearance* of things, but more importantly, their *apparitions* which, as the myth recounts, after having been recognized by us ('sitôt que nous les avons reconnues'), come back to life ('reviennent vivre avec nous') – as a work of art, 'la vraie vie'.

Secondly, situated right before an essential passage of *La Recherche*, i.e. that of the *Petites Madeleines*, this Celtic myth serves as a mythical analogy to Proust's theory of involuntary memory:

Il en est *ainsi* de notre passé. C'est peine perdue que nous cherchions à l'évoquer, tous les efforts de notre intelligence sont inutiles. Il est caché hors de son domaine et de sa portée, en quelque objet matériel (en la sensation que nous donnerait cet objet matériel), que nous ne soupçonnons pas. Cet objet, il dépend du hasard que nous le rencontrions avant de mourir, ou que nous ne le rencontrions pas.¹⁷⁸

beginning of the twentieth centuries. See Proust, *RTP I*, p. 1122; Miguet-Ollagnier, *Mythologie*, p. 267.

¹⁷⁶ This observation is informed by Topping's more general remark. See Margaret Topping, *Supernatural Proust: Myth and Metaphor in A la recherche du temps perdu* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 118.

¹⁷⁷ Proust, *RPT I*, p. 178. My italics.

¹⁷⁸ Proust, *RTP I*, p. 44. My italics.

The 'lost' time and memory may be 'dead', but are they 'mort à jamais' as the protagonist asks himself? '[C]'était possible. Il y a beaucoup de hasard en tout ceci'.¹⁷⁹ They are like the lost soul, one has to listen to their 'calling' to resurrect them, and such resurrection – in Proust's metaphorical handling of the myth – leads to the creation of artworks, in this instance, the protagonist's *livre*. However, one may never encounter any lost soul, because 'un second hasard, celui de notre mort, souvent ne nous permet pas d'attendre longtemps les faveurs du premier'.¹⁸⁰ This is a very important detail since the protagonist, towards the very end of *La Recherche*, is finally urged to write his book precisely at his realization of everyone's aging in time as well as his own mortality.¹⁸¹

Finally, Proust engages with this particular Celtic myth because of its commonality with other beliefs and rituals that he evokes in *La Recherche*, notably Orphism, featuring also metempsychosis and the transmigration of souls. Indeed, Proust's quasi architectonic engagement with the myth of Orpheus is so profound that it leads Albouy to call Proust's protagonist's vocational realisation a '*schéma orphique*',¹⁸² and Aubert to define Proust as an '*écrivain orphique*'.¹⁸³ If seeing the inherent structure of *La Recherche*, on both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, as essentially mythical or orphic relies on certain scholars' informed hypothesis,¹⁸⁴ Cheng's enthusiasm for the myth of Orpheus is self-

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 43.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ The protagonist does make a very fleeting 'Celtic' reference on these final pages, 'comme un monument druidique au sommet d'une île'. Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 618.

¹⁸² Pierre Albouy, 'Quelques images et structures mythiques dans *La recherche du temps perdu*', in *Mythographies* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1976), p. 345. Italics in the original.

¹⁸³ Aubert, *Traduction*, p. 109.

¹⁸⁴ Topping in *Supernatural Proust*, for example, suggests, with reference to Albouy's article, that the mythical or mythological structure or unity should be placed within a much wider framework of 'supernatural' images and references. In her words, 'incongruity, exuberant abundance and a refusal of closure characterize Proust's handling of these sources as much as do pattern and structure, and all find their place within this singularly intricate work, the novelistic embodiment of the dramatist's maxim: "I am human so nothing human is strange to me"'. My own concern here is not so much whether the myth of Orpheus is *the* central

confessed and it is certainly an important aspect of his *démarche proustienne*, as he comments: 'Orphée, le poète à la lyre, ordonne par son incantation le mouvement des rochers, des arbres et des animaux et, par là même, insère le destin de l'homme dans l'ordre de la Création'.¹⁸⁵ The myth of Orpheus is emblematic of the structures of both *Le Dit* and *La Recherche*.

II.4.2. Myth of Orpheus

Central to the myth of Orpheus is this legendary musician and poet's descent to the underworld to retrieve his wife, Eurydice. The 'schematic' connection between this myth and *La Recherche* is best encapsulated in Pierre Albouy's words as follows, where he singles out three key episodes of *La Recherche* that share the same dynamism of literary creation:

Marcel, en devenant écrivain, utilise le langage comme moyen d'une création mythique; l'écriture est création mythique. L'épisode des arbres est à mettre aussi en rapport avec celui de la madeleine; alors que l'épisode des clochers insiste sur le rôle de l'écriture dans la transfiguration mythique qui pourvoit les objets d'une essence (qui est leur secret), l'épisode de la madeleine met en lumière l'expérience existentielle qui correspond à cette découverte du secret des choses. Or, si l'on relit les pages fameuses où il est raconté comment la madeleine évoque des profondeurs Combray mort et ramené à la vie, on y découvre, de nouveau, *les images, la thématique, la structure orphiques qui caractérisent la mythologie proustienne: images d'une 'grande profondeur', de 'distances traversées', de la 'nuit' dont on remonte difficilement; bref, on nous suggère une descente aux enfers et la remontée d'Eurydice*. En rapprochant les trois épisodes parents de la madeleine, des clochers de Martinville et des arbres de Balbec, nous sommes amené à conclure que la création littéraire chez Proust – ou, pour mieux dire, *l'écriture* – constitue une *aventure orphique, laquelle nous fournit la structure dominante de la Recherche*.¹⁸⁶

structure of *La Recherche*; rather, my primary focus is Cheng's intercultural engagement with a particular myth that features prominently in Proust's novel. See Topping, *Supernatural*, p. 11.

¹⁸⁵ Cheng, *Le Dialogue*, Kindle Ebook.

¹⁸⁶ Albouy, 'Quelques images', p. 343. My italics.

Out of the three key episodes, we have extensively studied one (*les clochers de Martinville*) and touched upon one other (the Celtic myth leading to the madeleine passage), and our findings are consistent with Albouy's observation.

Largely developing Albouy's strong line of enquiry, Miguet-Ollagnier in *La Mythologie de Marcel Proust* exhaustively examines the Proustian reincarnations of the myth of Orpheus, especially in her chapter entitled 'Les Mythes de la remontée à la lumière'. She convincingly argues for the identifications Swann/Orphée and Odette/Eurydice lost 'dans un Paris sombre et infernal qui se confond parfois explicitement avec le Tartare du chant IV des *Géorgiques*', and how 'Proust transforme en effet les silhouettes parisiennes en figures mythiques virgiliennes' in *Un amour de Swann*.¹⁸⁷ Similar mythical identifications between the protagonist and Orphée on the one hand and Albertine and Eurydice on the other, are found in *La Fugitive*.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, Proust accentuates the *sonorous* aspect of the myth, particularly in the episode of the telephone call with the protagonist's grandmother. 'Le téléphone accomplit', as Albouy puts it, 'le mystère orphique de l'évocation des absents, des êtres lointains comme le sont les morts'.¹⁸⁹ Not only does Proust's description of the grandmother's voice imply the ascent from or descent to the underworld ('il m'a semblé que cette voix clamait des profondeurs d'où l'on ne remonte pas');¹⁹⁰ it culminates in the protagonist's exclamation, 'Grand'mère, grand'mère', after the sudden disconnection of the phone call, which finds a distinct echo in Virgil's 'Eurydice, Eurydice'. Orpheus is explicitly referred to for that matter, 'il me semblait que c'était déjà une ombre chérie que je venais de laisser se perdre parmi les ombres, et seul devant l'appareil, je continuais à répéter en vain: "Grand'mère,

¹⁸⁷ Miguet-Ollagnier, *Mythologie*, p. 87-88.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 273.

¹⁸⁹ Albouy, 'Quelques images', p. 345.

¹⁹⁰ Proust, *RTP II*, p. 432.

grand'mère", comme Orphée resté seul, répète le nom de la morte'.¹⁹¹ As Miguet-Ollagnier further comments: 'la présence de la voix, séparée de l'être physique, donne au narrateur-Orphée, à la fois la joie de ramener Eurydice et la frustration déchirante de ne pouvoir pas regarder, toucher, embrasser la femme aimée'.¹⁹² This phrase is reminiscent of Tianyi's last oral communication with l'Amante: 'Yumei, Yumei, acceptons la terrible épreuve de la séparation. Nous nous retrouverons. Nous nous sommes déjà retrouvés, à jamais retrouvés'.¹⁹³ This connection between *la voix sonore* and *la voie mythique* would be of further interest to Cheng.

The *schema orphique* applies to *Le Dit* too. Just as the Orphic myth can be linked to the Celtic belief in *La Recherche*, Cheng explicitly relates it to the Buddhist legend of Mulian, 'tout comme lors de la mort de ma mère, je pense à la légende bouddhique qui relate les séjours de Mulian en enfer. A cette légende vient d'ailleurs se mêler le mythe d'Orphée appris en Europe'.¹⁹⁴ Elsewhere in his essays, Cheng compares the *voix/voie* of Orphée to that of Chan Buddhism more broadly:

il y a donc deux voix/voies auxquelles je me suis référé, celle du *chan* et celle d'Orphée. Quelle que puisse être la différence qui les sépare, je crois déceler un point commun qui les unit: toutes deux impliquent de la part de celui qui chante qu'il subisse le passage d'une 'néantisation'.¹⁹⁵

As far as the macrocosmic structure is concerned, the theme of the descent to and return from the underworld features in each part of the novel. In fact, the preface, written by a different narrator who claims to know Tianyi personally, already paves the way for such a thematic development. The narrator decides to visit Tianyi in a care home 'où

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

¹⁹² Miguet-Ollagnier, *Mythologie*, p. 278.

¹⁹³ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 187.

¹⁹⁴ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 275. This Buddhist legend, in Tianyi's words, 'racontait comment Mulian, l'ardent bouddhiste, était descendu aux enfers pour affronter mille épreuves afin de délivrer l'âme de sa mère défunte.' See Cheng, *Dit*, p. 182.

¹⁹⁵ Cheng, *Le Dialogue*, Kindle Ebook.

vivaient des personnes sans famille, des handicapés physiques, et puis des personnes jugées mentalement “dérangées,””¹⁹⁶ in post-Cultural-Revolution China. After returning to France, the narrator himself suffers from grave illness and is at death’s door. But ‘au sortir d’une opération’, he has ‘la surprise de [se] redécouvrir... vivant’. The narrator, as if ‘indebted’ to Tianyi, undertakes the task of ‘restituer’ Tianyi’s life story and ‘le transposer en français’.¹⁹⁷ It seems that composition of the narrative itself has something to do with the transmigration of Tianyi’s soul, as previously discussed in relation to Proust’s mention of metempsychosis and the Celtic belief on the first page of *La Recherche*.

Towards the end of Part One, after learning of his mother’s death in Tchoungking (described as ‘une fournaise infernale’), Tianyi continues to describe his ‘voyage de Lanzhou à Tchoungking dans la chaleur et la poussière’ as ‘une longue descente aux enfers’.¹⁹⁸ At the beginning of Part Two, perhaps more relevant to Proust’s Orphic reference in *Un amour de Swann*, Tianyi recounts his initial experience of Paris as another descent to hell (until he has encountered ‘un visage féminin, [...] être qui sache [lui] sourire’, the clarinetist Véronique¹⁹⁹):

Oui, j’apprendrai à aimer cette ville où je vais vivre un certain temps.
J’apprendrai à aimer ce pays qui se trouve au cœur de l’Europe occidentale.
Ce sera une longue initiation. En attendant, il faut passer – je le pressens, je le sais déjà – par le purgatoire, sinon par l’enfer.²⁰⁰

Elsewhere in Part Two, Tianyi infrequently evokes ‘cet enfer parisien’.²⁰¹ At the beginning of the final part, Tianyi remarks: ‘retrouver l’Amante! [...] Je sais que retourner en cette Chine dénaturée que je ne reconnaîtrai plus, ce sera pour moi une véritable descente aux

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 8.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 182.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 256.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 196.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 256.

enfers'.²⁰² Towards the end, after Tianyi eventually finds his Ami (instead of l'Amante) – supposedly dead already – in Northern China, he says: 'j'accompagne littéralement mon ami dans sa traversée de l'enfer'.²⁰³

On the microcosmic level, too, the Orphic myth is reflected in intradiegetical terms. Just as Orpheus travels as an Argonaut ('sailor of the Argo') in search of the Golden Fleece, with his lyre being his sole weapon, Tianyi sails to Europe in search of a certain 'spiritual knowledge',²⁰⁴ relying on his 'arme' – 'le pouvoir magique du pinceau et de l'encre'.²⁰⁵ Tianyi returns to China after Yumei's calling ('reviens!' 'Te voilà enfin! Nous voilà enfin!'),²⁰⁶ only to find out, like Orpheus looking back at Eurydice near the threshold of the underworld, that Yumei is lost forever. However, it is Tianyi's male companion, Haolang (l'Ami), who miraculously 'returns' from the dead, as Yumei has previously misinformed Tianyi about Haolang's death. Thereafter, Tianyi's 'destin' to 'retrouver l'Amante'²⁰⁷ is transferred to that of 'rejoindre' l'Ami:

Quelle fatalité! Quelle absurdité! Quelle est cette réalité capable
d'engendrer des situations aussi cruelles qu'inattendues? Je suis revenu en

²⁰² *Ibid.* p. 275.

²⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 369.

²⁰⁴ This point requires an extensive clarification. In ancient China, 'the West' is generally used to refer to today's India. For centuries, Chinese Buddhist monks made the pilgrimage along the Silk Road to the 'Western regions' in order to obtain sacred Buddhist scriptures ('cette ville [Dunhuang] prospère a servi de lieu d'échanges entre la Chine et l'extérieur, et de halte pour les pèlerins bouddhistes'). Tianyi's Chan master draws Tianyi's attention to the analogy between China's profoundly consequential encounter with Indian thought and art centuries before and that between China and the West today, 'nos maîtres, du VIII^e au XI^e siècle, n'avaient-ils pas justement intégré l'art indien? [...] C'est là où je veux en venir, car toi, tu ne peux pas éviter d'affronter l'autre. Je sens qu'à l'issue de cette guerre, la rencontre de la Chine et de l'Occident est inévitable'. Or, elsewhere, Tianyi remarks: 'nous savions qu'au point où était parvenue la culture chinoise, après son long dialogue avec l'Inde et l'Islam, l'Occident était l'interlocuteur plus qu'essentiel, incontournable'. Cheng, *Dit*, pp. 165, 166, 170, 83. The topos of the Silk Road has already been evoked by Yu in his appropriation of Proust's prologue. See the relevant section in Part I Chapter II.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 23.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 272.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 275.

Chine à cause de la mort de Haolang et de la survivance de Yumei. Voici Haolang vivant et Yumei morte. [...] Tant que je resterai en vie, en cette vie, je n'aurai qu'un but: le rejoindre.²⁰⁸

Resonating with Orpheus's turning of passion for boys after his eventual failure to retrieve Eurydice, there is an intense development of homoeroticism between Tianyi and Haolang, 'si j'aime Yumei, n'est-ce pas une raison de plus d'aimer aussi Haolang?'²⁰⁹

Haolang is the actual poet, the Orphic bard, of the novel.²¹⁰ He is the one to whom Yumei feels more sexually attracted. Yumei's feeling for Tianyi shows a 'sisterly' leaning, as she declares: 'je suis ta soeur, je suis ton amante. [...] Ah! Comme j'ai aimé notre amitié, elle est plus noble que l'amour. N'aurions-nous pas pu demeurer tous les trois dans l'amitié?'²¹¹ There is an undeniable attraction between Tianyi and Haolang right at the beginning of their encounter. Tianyi explicitly compares their 'friendship' with his love for Yumei:

Cette amitié ardemment vécue me fit prendre conscience que la passion de l'amitié, vécue dans des circonstances exceptionnelles, peut être aussi intense que celle de l'amour. Je ne manquai pas de comparer ma rencontre avec Haolang à celle que j'avais eue avec Yumei. Si cette dernière m'avait ému jusqu'à l'extrême racine de mon être, les larmes de nostalgie ou de gratitude qu'elle avait suscitées étaient pareilles à une source jaillie d'une terre native, pleine d'une douceur confiante. A travers le regard de l'Amante, tous les éléments qui composent l'univers se sont révélés sensibles, reliés par une lumière diffuse, mais unique et par là unifiante. La rencontre avec mon ami, en revanche, fut une véritable irruption qui provoquait en moi de violentes secousses, m'entraînant vers l'inconnu, vers de continuels dépassements. L'attraction physique, confusément ressentie, n'était pas dans l'urgence de nos soif et faim l'aimant principal. Ce que l'autre ouvrit devant moi était un univers insoupçonné, insondable, celui de l'esprit. A côté de la nature brute, il y a donc une autre réalité, celle des signes. Les paroles exaltées du jeune poète, ainsi que ses écrits m'ont fait comprendre qu'à l'homme qui pense et crée tout demeure non clos mais

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 297.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 340.

²¹⁰ This particular aspect would make the character another alter ego of the author. Cheng is of course the real poet, some of Haolang's poems cited in the novel being adapted from Cheng's actual poems.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 185.

infiniment ouvert. En compagnie de l'Ami, mon être littéralement éclaté avançait désormais vers un horizon lui aussi éclaté.²¹²

Prior to this dense and elegant passage, Tianyi's attention is specifically drawn to Haolang's reading of *Leaves of Grass* by the American poet Walt Whitman: 'je remarquai qu'il s'agissait d'un recueil de poésie portant le titre *Feuilles d'herbes* (de Whitman). Nous avons ri tous deux de bon cœur à cause de la coïncidence entre ce titre et l'endroit où le livre venait d'être ramassé'.²¹³ Whitman, like Proust, is known for his homo- or bisexuality, and *Leaves* features extensive discussions of delight in sensual pleasures. It is perhaps no 'coïncidence' that Cheng makes this particular reference that makes his two male characters laugh 'de bon cœur' at their first meeting – physical intimacy is what their relationship grows into in Part Three of the novel:

A bout de souffle, il titube sur quelques pas, se laisse choir dans les feuilles sèches, bras ouverts, face au ciel. Je le rejoins, me couche à côté de lui, tenant sa main dans la mienne. Je sens sa respiration haletante et la puissante pulsation de ce corps ami, alourdi par plus de dix ans d'épreuves physiques. [...] Haolang m'écoute sans mot dire. Je sens seulement la pression de sa main qui serre maintenant la mienne plus fort, au point de me faire mal, de me broyer les os. Un long moment se passe. [...] Tout, amitié et amour confondus, y est accepté, exalté comme un mystère fatal.²¹⁴

The setting of this homoerotic scene echoes precisely the imagery of Whitman's 'leaves of grass', although, instead of quoting Whitman's work, Cheng actually inserts his own poem in the above-cited passage (indicated by the first ellipsis).

It should be noted that later in the Orphic myth after Eurydice's final death, especially in Ovid's version, a strong sense of misogyny prevails, as the protagonist is eventually dismembered by the frustrated female followers of Bacchus, who are enraged by Orpheus's passion for young boys and his indifference to those women's love pursuit.

²¹² *Ibid.* pp. 79-80.

²¹³ *Ibid.* p. 79.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 368.

The misogynist element is nowhere to be found in Cheng's Daoist engagement with the myth, which is arguably – at least in part – due to the general affirmation of women's role in Daoism, a philosophy which is 'unworldly and basically matriarchal in orientation'.²¹⁵ At any rate, as Albouy comments on the Orphic myth: 'c'est moins de misogynie qu'il faudrait parler que de la quête de l'androgynie idéale'.²¹⁶

Our ultimate purpose of exploring the Orphic myth is to relate Cheng's mythical engagement back to *La Recherche*. It is therefore worth further developing Cheng's treatment of love, sexuality, and friendship in *Le Dit*. Similar to Proust's fluid conception of love, notably his famous connection between adults' love for partners and children's love for parents,²¹⁷ Cheng explicitly associates his 'filial piety' – a core tenet in Confucian teaching – with his passion for Yumei. In addition, this adults' love for partners is frequently compared to that between siblings. While listening to Dvorak's music, Tianyi states: 'l'écoutant, je me laissais porter par la vague d'émotion, celle qui me faisait sentir que d'un instant à l'autre j'allais retrouver les êtres chers qui m'attendaient: ma mère, ma sœur, l'Amante...'²¹⁸ The protagonist explicitly compares the attempted reunion with his dying mother with his search for l'Amante as he intrepidly returns to 'cette Chine dénaturée', as in the quotation I have already partly cited: 'en ai-je peur? Pas vraiment. Tout comme lors de la mort de ma mère, je pense à la légende bouddhique qui relate les séjours de Mulian en enfer. A cette légende vient d'ailleurs se mêler le mythe d'Orphée appris en Europe'.²¹⁹ This amalgamation between 'filial piety' and passionate love is crystalized in the intercultural mixing of the two myths. Furthermore, this particular Buddhist legend, with its

²¹⁵ Gulik, *Sexual Life*, p. 44.

²¹⁶ Albouy, *Mythes*, p. 190.

²¹⁷ Alison Finch, 'Love, Sexuality and Friendship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. by Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007[2001]), pp. 167-182 (p. 171).

²¹⁸ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 92.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 275.

emphasis on ‘filial piety’, can already be regarded as a *sinicized*, and more precisely, *Confucianized*, version of the original myth, an exemplar of cultural translation between ancient India and China.²²⁰

Just like Proust, Cheng explores the ‘malleable borders between love and friendship’, taking full advantage of the shared etymology of ‘aimer’, ‘amour’, ‘amitié’, ‘ami(e)’, and ‘amant(e)’ in the French language, as Alison Finch accurately explains:

‘aimer’ means both ‘like’ and ‘love’ and the second meaning of ‘ami/e’ is ‘one who has a sexual relationship with another’. But Proust also constantly stretches the meaning of the word ‘amitié’ so that it too becomes ambiguous and reinterpretable. (‘Amitié’ can, rarely, have the same amorous application in French as ‘ami’, but when it does it is far slyer and more self-consciously euphemistic [...])²²¹

Cheng’s decision to nickname Yumei ‘l’Amante’ and Haolang ‘l’Ami’ cannot make this malleable vision of love and friendship more explicit, to recap an already cited sentence, ‘tout, amitié et amour confondus, y est accepté, exalté comme un mystère fatal’.²²²

However, it would be slightly misleading to continue to investigate Tianyi’s homo- or bisexuality *à la proustienne* – i.e. applying Proust’s as well as his contemporaries’ sexological theories to the reading of *Le Dit*.²²³ For this is precisely where Cheng *reorients* the established Western line of enquiry into sexuality by introducing a Daoist alternative. Yumei/l’Amante and Haolang/l’Ami can be read as allegorical figures of *yin* and *yang*, which

²²⁰ The earliest source of the Buddhist legend ‘Mulian en enfer’ is indeed, as Cheng describes in *Le Dit*, found in the Dunhuang Caves. It is generally suspected to have a certain Indian origin, but we do not have any concrete evidence except for its diegetic similarity – i.e. the descent to hell – to the story of Ksitigarbha, one of the four principal bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism. Incidentally, the latter legend is also depicted in the Dunhuang Caves. For an introduction and analysis of the manuscripts found in Dunhuang, where these legends were first recorded in China, see Victor Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²²¹ Finch, ‘Love’, p. 180.

²²² Cheng, *Cheng*, p. 368.

²²³ For a discussion of the influence of the *Zwischenstufen* theory on Proust, see Part I Chapter I.

are two primordial cosmic forces of *qi* (Cheng's *souffle vital*). In the context of sex and sexuality, *yin* is predominant in woman and *yang* in men. But as Charlotte Furth stresses:

there was nothing fixed and immutable about male and female as aspects of yin and yang. [...] They are interdependent, mutually reinforcing and capable of turning into their opposites. This natural philosophy would seem to lend itself to a broad and tolerant view of variation in sexual behavior and gender roles.²²⁴

Chou further clarifies: 'yin and yang are not ontologically binary, as what they produce are not generic women and men, but persons in specific relations such as mother and father, husband and wife, brother and sister, emperor and favorite'.²²⁵ In other words, *yin* and *yang* are fundamentally relativistic.

Hence, Tianyi is *yang* relative to Yumei, but *yin* relative to Haolang. Tianyi's first description of Yumei particularly emphasizes the *yin* force in her by associating Yumei with the fertile and regenerative spring: 'elle dit sur un ton naturel: "Regarde ces primevères, le printemps est là!" Avec le printemps, elle aussi renaît à la vie'. After this first encounter, Tianyi 'ressen[t] un tressaillement presque serein, comme si Yumei était attendue et que de toute éternité elle devait venir, un peu à la manière de ces arbres d'hiver qui accueillent, légèrement surpris mais ne doutant nullement de son arrivée, la brise printanière'.²²⁶ By contrast, Haolang's first appearance in the novel already manifests strong masculine features: 'homme du Nord, il était d'une taille plus haute que la moyenne. De teint légèrement foncé, comme coulé dans du bronze, il en imposait par sa seule présence, sombre et tranquille'.²²⁷ More specifically, Haolang is identified with the element of fire, *yang par excellence* (according to the *Book of Changes*): 'l'adolescent de seize ans qu'il était

²²⁴ Charlotte Furth, 'Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth Century China', *Late Imperial China*, 9.2 (1988), 1-30 (p. 3).

²²⁵ Chou, *Tongzhi*, p. 18.

²²⁶ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 52.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 78.

alors avait tout de même assez de lucidité pour savoir que sa vie n'était pas faite de la seule force brute, qu'un feu sans complaisance le brûlait de l'intérieur'.²²⁸ Because of his outstanding physical force, Haolang, meaning 'l'Homme à l'esprit vaste', is later nicknamed 'le Loup hurlant' through a word game based on homophones.²²⁹ By portraying the eroticism between Tianyi, l'Amante, and l'Ami, as well as making connections between 'filial piety' and passionate love, Cheng effectively recasts a well-established Proustian thematics (love, friendship, homo- and bisexuality) from the Chinese perspective, offering alternative visions and theories. A modernist aesthetics in Proust which reflects, in Finch's words, 'a "modern" acceptance of paradoxical or polymorphous sexuality',²³⁰ is thus injected a fresh dose of ancient Daoist and Confucian elements when we read *Le Dit* against *La Recherche* as a kind of 'Chinese shadow'.

Finally, love, friendship, and sexuality are always accompanied by the signs of art. Tianyi's longing to reunite with his mother and later with Yumei is compared to the Buddhist legend of Mulian which he learns from the wall painting at the archaeological site of Dunhuang; his spiritual and physical intimacy with Haolang leads to his spontaneous chanting of poetry; his love for Yumei is crystalized in his final 'unfinished' fresco of Yumei's portrait; even Tianyi's 'amitié amoureuse'²³¹ with the slightly secondary character Véronique is preceded by the recital of the violoncellist Pierre Fournier. This is because, to return to Deleuze again, knowing another being is fundamentally deciphering and

²²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 78. For an explanation of the identification of *yang* with fire and sun, see Gulik, *Sexual Life*, p. 40.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 295.

²³⁰ Finch, 'love', p. 177.

²³¹ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 261.

interpreting the signs it sends out; and 'au niveau le plus profond', the essence of life is located 'dans les signes de l'art'.²³²

²³² Deleuze, *Signes*, p. 11, 22.

III. Transcendence through the Void

The investigation of this chapter on Cheng and Proust has proceeded from 'empirical' textual findings to conceptual comparisons. The latter exploration is a concerted attempt to 'verify' Cheng's self-claimed '*démarche proustienne*', in a manner which is rather similar to scientific speculation that can be confirmed by detailed analysis.¹ But additionally, Cheng's Proustian hypertext also demonstrates a strong sense of alterity, a kind of fundamental intention towards the other.² Further still, Cheng's aesthetic of reorientation and *rapprochement* aims at 'transcendence' and universal harmony, as he asserts, 'la vraie transcendance, paradoxalement, se situe dans l'*entre*, dans ce qui jaillit de plus haut quand a lieu le décisif échange entre les êtres et l'Être'.³ At the beginning of the section on Cheng's mythical engagement with Proust, I cursorily suggested *ternarism* as the way to understand Cheng's broader literary and cultural enterprise. In Cheng's own words, 'all art is ternary'.⁴ Ternarism will now be properly developed to help further conceptualize Cheng's cross-cultural Proustian hypertext.

Cheng's vision of transcendence is grounded in his interpretation of the Daoist notion of *yin-yang* which is associated with *le vide médian*. The Daoist cosmogony and ontology are founded on the idea of *qi* (or *ch'i*, 气), literally 'breath, air', or 'souffle' in French, 'à la fois matière et esprit'.⁵ The primordial *qi* (*yuanqi*, 元气) signals the Original Void, a void that aims at plenitude, 'la grande plénitude est comme vide; alors elle est

¹ I borrow this methodological analogy from Orr's reconceptualization of 'influence studies'. See Orr, *Intertextuality*, p. 85.

² This remark is particularly informed by Spivak's theory of 'planetary.' She explains: 'the planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan [...] punctuation mark? To be human is to be intended toward the other.' Spivak, *Discipline*, pp. 72-3.

³ Cheng, *Beauté*, p. 23.

⁴ Cheng, 'Zhongxi hebi', p. 317. 艺术都是三元的

⁵ Cheng, *Beauté*, p. 74.

intarissable'. According to Cheng, the complex relationship among Dao, *qi*, void, *yin*, *yang*, and *le vide médian* can be summarized as follows:

Le Souffle primordial assurant l'unité originelle continue à animer tous les êtres, les reliant en un gigantesque réseau d'entrecroisements et d'engendrement appelé le Tao, la Voie.

Au sein de la Voie, la nature du Souffle et son rythme sont ternaires, en ce sens que le Souffle primordial se divise en trois types de souffles qui agissent concomitamment: le souffle Yin, le souffle Yang et le souffle du Vide médian. Entre le Yang, puissance active, et le Yin, douceur réceptive, le souffle du Vide médian – qui tire son pouvoir du Vide originel – a le don de les entraîner dans l'interaction positive, cela en vue d'une transformation mutuelle, bénéfique pour l'un et pour l'autre.⁶

This transformative process signals a spiritual exaltation and a form of ceaseless transcendence. It must be stressed that, throughout the discussion, I have stuck to Cheng's 'vide médian' in its French form, this is essentially because *le vide médian*, as an individual concept, is very much Cheng's own conceptual development based on the dynamics between *yin* and *yang*. This idea is most noticeably derived from the following already cited passage in *Laozi*:

Le Tao d'origine engendre l'Un
L'Un engendre le Deux
Le Deux engendre le Trois
Le Trois produit les dix mille êtres
Les dix mille êtres s'adossent aux [sic.] Yin
Et embrassent le Yang
L'harmonie naît au souffle du Vide médian⁷

Such is Cheng's own translation of Chapter XLII of *Laozi* in verse. Cheng clearly places *le vide médian* as a separate concept alongside *yin-yang*. However, according to the original text, whether *le vide médian* should stand as a 'conceptual equal' to *yin-yang* is rather debatable.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 74-5.

⁷ Cheng, *Vide et plein*, p. 59. The original text in Chinese reads: 道生一；一生二；二生三；三生万物。万物负阴而抱阳，充气以为和。 *Chinese Classics: Tao Te Ching*, trans. by D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989[1963]), p. 62.

To clarify the point, it would be helpful to compare D. C. Lau's and, more recently, Edmund Ryden's English translations of the same passage:

(Lau's translation) The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures. The myriad creatures carry on their backs the *yin* and embrace in their arms the *yang* and are the *blending of the generative forces of the two*.⁸

(Ryden's translation) The Way generates the Unique; The Unique generates the Double; The Double generates the Triplet; The Triplet generates the myriad things. The myriad things recline on *yin* and embrace *yang* While vacuous *qi* holds them in harmony.⁹

As can be seen, *le vide médian* does not ostensibly feature in Lau's translation; it is simply understood as a process instead of a concept. Whereas Cheng explicitly acknowledges '*trois types de souffle*', Lau sees only 'the generative forces of the *two*'. On the other hand, Ryden's 'vacuous *qi*' corresponds to Cheng's 'Souffle primordial' and 'Vide originel' rather than his 'Vide médian', although Cheng does define *le vide médian* in relation to them: 'ce Vide médian, un souffle lui-même, procède du Vide originel dont il tire son pouvoir'.

Cheng's reinterpretation of *yin-yang* and his insistence on *le vide médian* largely foreground his literary aesthetic and artistic vision. While the *yin-yang* dynamics is incorporated into his construction of intercultural dialogues between China and the West, *le vide médian* could be seen to metonymically refer to not only the inherent fictionality of literature as a kind of essential void, but also Cheng's humble role as the creative intermediary, who, like his description of *le vide médian*, 'a le don de les [China-West] entraîner dans l'interaction positive, cela en vue d'une transformation mutuelle, bénéfique pour l'un et pour l'autre'.¹⁰ Like the Daoist priest who spends his life pursuing personal

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 63.

⁹ *Laozi: Daodejing*, trans. by Edmund Ryden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 89.

¹⁰ Cheng, *Beauté*, p. 75.

transcendence,¹¹ Cheng searches for deep spiritual correspondences between Chinese and Western cultures, by envisaging as well as tentatively creating the literature to come, a literature which, as I hope my analysis to have shown, enables us to rethink and enrich both cultural traditions.

This 'transcendent' cultural enterprise behind Cheng's engagement with Proust marks a qualitative difference from mainland Chinese writers' intertextual practice. While the mainland Chinese writers' references to Proust are examples of cross-cultural intertextuality, the effect of which seems to be limited to the Chinese context, what we see in Cheng is a *transcultural* rewriting which speaks to two cultural traditions and aims to reorient both Western and Chinese literary aesthetics. Of course, one can always read *Le Dit* independently, which is also a key trait of the Genettian hypertext mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. But reading *Le Dit* against *La Recherche* certainly enhances the experience of cross-fertilisation and empowers us to concretely understand Cheng's literary ambition. The eminent Proust scholar Luc Fraisse entitles his chapter on Cheng and Proust '*Le Dit de Tianyi, palimpseste de La Recherche?*'¹² with a question mark signalling the ambiguity and uncertainty of such a reading, which I hope can now be seen as no longer necessary. If, etymologically and symbolically, the word 'palimpsest' still only reflects the Greco-Latin, and by extension, European heritage, we could perhaps replace it with a Chinese metaphor: *Le Dit de Tianyi, c'est La Recherche à l'ombre chinoise*.

¹¹ Transcendence in this case can be narrowly understood as the Daoist's cultivation of detachment and mastery of yin-yang forces to reach the status of a saintly immortal, known as *xian* 仙 in Chinese. Incidentally, the character of the Daoist priest also features, albeit briefly, in *Le Dit*. Cheng, *Dit*, pp. 28-30.

¹² Fraisse, *Musique*, p. 633.

Conclusion

Proust would probably never have envisaged this round-trip between France and China enjoyed by his novel, propagating literary ‘descendants’ that have witnessed and themselves epitomized contemporary Franco-Chinese intellectual and artistic transaction. Echoing a number of classical sources, the iconic Chinese title for *La Recherche*, as has been thoroughly investigated in the thesis, signifies a long line of Chinese philosophical and literary traditions to a Chinese readership. The choice and composition of this ‘traditional’ title for a canonical foreign work has symbolically reflected the major post-Mao intellectual preoccupations with cultural ‘renewal’ and ‘opening’ in and since the 1980’s. As expounded at the beginning of our enquiry, the translation and critical reception of Proust’s work in China have been shaped by socio-political vicissitudes of modern and contemporary China; equally, they have synecdochically reflected Chinese intellectual and artistic developments before and after the establishment of the PRC in 1949, and subsequently following two successive phases of economic reform in post-Mao China from 1979 until now. The critical preferences for Proustian themes of time and memory in the Chinese reception of *La Recherche* were brought to light by our examination of traditional Chinese literary discourses. Meanwhile, the lexical and discursive shift regarding homosexuality and sadomasochism manifested in the first and more recent translations of Proust’s work was also evidently informed by contemporary sociological works on sexuality in China, many of which were directly influenced by Western sexological discourses. In this respect, the ‘knowledge of [the] socio-historical context’ of Proust’s work in translation ‘furnishes the starting point for interpretation itself’.¹

¹ Moretti, *Wonders*, p. 8.

If we compare the mainland Chinese creative reception of Proust with the transcultural dialogue with *La Recherche* initiated by the Chinese diaspora in France, their commonalities and qualitative differences quickly emerge. While manifesting a similar ambition for Chinese cultural heritage to 'go global', the two groups' varied approaches to Proust demonstrate contrasting senses of alterity, which carry rather different cross-cultural implications. The three mainland Chinese writers' intertextual engagement with *La Recherche*, which has necessarily been filtered through the Chinese translations, signals, to borrow Christopher Bush's expression, 'cultural otherness in an allegory of internal otherness'.² Proust, as a relatively new, foreign sign of canonical otherness, signifies a difference to them, or indeed, his novel enters into a relation of *différance* with these Chinese writers' works. That is, the sign of Proust, which only represents a 'présence différée' of Proust's original work, interacts with the Chinese writers' works by entering a 'mouvement de jeu' which produces cultural differences as well as effects of such differences.³ Such a sign can only be secondary and provisional, as Derrida explains: 'seconde depuis une présence originelle et perdue dont le signe viendrait à dériver; provisoire au regard de cette présence finale et manquante en vue de laquelle le signe serait en mouvement de médiation'.⁴ The geographic and cultural topoi⁵ in which Proust's text originated seem rather inconsequential to these writers' interpretations. These writers do not attempt to represent a 'truthful' Proust or an 'authentic' West at large. Their personal (re)interpretation, (mis)appropriation, and creative (re)imagination of Proust

² Bush, 'The Other', pp. 162-180.

³ I reappropriate Derrida's following remark: 'ce qui s'écrit *différance*, ce sera donc le mouvement de jeu qui "produit", par ce qui n'est pas simplement une activité, ces différences, ces effets de différence'. Jacques Derrida, '*La différence*', in *Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), pp. 41-66 (p. 50).

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 48.

⁵ Following Bush's use of the term, 'topoi' understood 'both in the sense of commonplaces and locations'. *Ibid.* p. 166.

exemplify their impatient embrace of their newly found intellectual, artistic, and in Wei's case, sexual, freedom. Additionally, their responses to Proust mark their self-conscious distancing from the 'Red China' under Mao by engaging – albeit superficially – with the canon of world literature (dominated by the West). Although Wang and Yu's overall understanding of Proust remains limited, their attempts to re-enact certain Chinese cultural traditions in their creative reading of *La Recherche* are nevertheless noticeable. Their engagements, albeit superficial, still help to expand the Chinese 'horizon of expectations', over which Proust's work could potentially 'speak to' the Chinese sense of 'time as water/river' (in Wang) and connect China and France through the (re)creation of a Silk Road in memory (in Yu). Comparing Wang and Yu's perception of Proust's work with that of Wei, we also notice a 'horizon of change' within the same framework of contemporary China. Wei's receptive appreciation of the literary qualities of *La Recherche* as stereotypically 'masculine', 'feminine', 'hipstery', and that can be related to drugs, sex, and the rock music scene in her respective short stories, marks out an 'aesthetic distance' from Wang and Yu's previous receptions and creates a new horizon of expectations.⁶ The reading and understanding of Proust's work reflect the literary and intellectual development of post-Mao China more than that of France and Europe. But these writers' cross-cultural intertextual practice affected by the Chinese translation is unilateral: its effect is for the most part limited to the Chinese context.

In contrast, Cheng has been settled in France since the beginning of Mao's era, and the historical specificities of contemporary China and their associated ideological factors, though crucial to Cheng's diegetic configuration in *Le Dit*, do not seem to manifest themselves in his engagement with Proust. In fact, as noted in Part II, Cheng's

⁶ 'Horizon of expectations', 'horizon of change', and 'aesthetic distance' all derive from Hans Robert Jauss's reception theory. See Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1982 [1978]).

reformulation of Proust's novel as *A la recherche du temps à venir*, with its emphasis on 'le différé' and 'l'inachevé' for 'un futur aussi continu qu'inconnu',⁷ strongly indicates the French poststructuralist prism of perception rather than the shifting of ideological tensions in contemporary Chinese society. Moreover, different from mainland Chinese writers, the representation of the Other becomes both a literary aesthetic and a cultural responsibility for Cheng. Indeed, Cheng's double perspective on Franco-Chinese literary and cultural interaction undertakes to represent not just the Other, but also, in some sense, to borrow Bush's expression again, 'the Other of the Other'.⁸ The geographic, cultural, and epistemic topoi of both Proust's and Cheng's texts become essential critical ingredients of a transcultural dialogue. Such a dialogue disconcerts not only the historical time, but also the immediate cultural contexts and their associated values which Cheng ultimately aims to transcend.

Malcolm Bowie in his seminal work, *Proust Among the Stars*, employs the interstellar allegory – informed by Proust's narrator's own observation during a dinner at Rivebelle in *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* – to characterize Proust's way of 'linking the multifariousness of human experience with the kaleidoscopic variety of his own writing'.⁹ The elaborate and polyphonic texture of Proust's prose is seen and read as 'stars' that are 'a pure scattering of luminous points' at one moment, and at the next moment, 'constellations, gigantic intimations of structure'.¹⁰ Both the astronomical and the modern popular senses of 'star' apply to the way Proust is situated in relation to established

⁷ Cheng, *Dit*, p. 191.

⁸ Bush employs this expression rather playfully, and notably with a question mark. He clarifies: 'in Lacanian terms there can't be an Other of the Other because the very formulation assures the unconditional singularity of the Other. [...] The Other of the Other is the other'. Bush, 'The Other', p. 178.

⁹ Malcolm Bowie, *Proust Among the Stars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 319.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 320.

contemporary mainland Chinese and Franco-Chinese writers by the present thesis. Proust's work travels to China through translation and is conditionally received and (re-)canonized along with the ideological shift of modern and contemporary Chinese society; and a Chinese creative response in French is simultaneously brought forth and well received back in France via the Chinese diasporic community, initiating a transcultural dialogue characteristic of contemporary migrant literature.

This circular trajectory fruitfully delineates a dynamic model of international canonization which manifests 'a different logic and different values' from national canonization.¹¹ In the course of the present study, I have demonstrated not only how Proust has come to be canonized in China, but also how mainland Chinese writers have both contributed to, and profited from, Proust's Chinese canonization, largely in the attempt to raise their 'international' profiles in order to strive for their own canonicity at home. Or, in Cheng's case, engaging with the French canon from a migrant and transcultural perspective creates new positions in the literary field and proves to be an effective pathway to contemporary French national canon formation.¹² His fame and success within and through the diasporic community in France then leads to his Chinese canonization, in which Proust now plays only a small part. Therefore, the geopolitically circular line of enquiry pursued by this thesis has effectively mapped a *constellation* of works that, to continue in Thomsen's words, 'share properties of formal and thematic character, where canonized works can bring attention to less canonized, but affiliated,

¹¹ Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 3.

¹² This remark is informed by Thomsen's following more general observation: 'migrant writers have been historically good at creating new positions in the literary field, because they bring in an intimate knowledge of other traditions and cultures [...] Creating new positions does not guarantee that they will succeed, but the chance of coming up with something new is enhanced by existing between cultures of which the author can be equally critical'. Thomsen, *World Literature*, p. 71.

works, and draw them into the scene of world literature'.¹³ In this respect, Bowie's interstellar allegory of Proust's writing has a much extended implication for my comparatist approach in this study. A constellation is

a group of stars visibly related to each other in a particular configuration. In three-dimensional space, most of the stars we see have little relation to one another, but can appear to be grouped on the celestial sphere of the night sky. Humans excel at finding patterns and throughout history have grouped stars that appear close to one another into constellations.¹⁴

A 'constellational' approach to world literature insists then on 'using international canonization as an analytical resource',¹⁵ as has been done in my study of Proust and China.

A 'strong' constellation, according to Thomsen, should excel in the following attributes:

First, it is 'realistic', especially in terms of its empirical grounding;

Second, it is 'innovative' in its

capacity for finding similarities in works that are usually not thought of as belonging together, but which will have a greater chance of being connected, because the canonical imperative directs the gaze towards a limited body of works, and because the idea of the constellation is not to find an almost complete coherence among works, but to connect central attributes that can also be said to define the work, in contrast to other, less canonical works from the same authors or the same literatures;

Third, it is 'pluralistic' in its

ability to connect less circulated literature with the most internationally canonized works, and describe how they belong to the same wave in a certain period, and focus on the evolution of literature in time, [...] or how they have been canonized as an expression of a certain interest in the literary community in the longer process of canonization, [...] how the voice of migrant writers display properties that were appealing in the history of twentieth century literature;

Finally, it is 'didactic' in its 'ability to establish a point of view and reduce complexity by the use of international canonization, while at the same time facilitating unlikely meetings of texts across cultures'.¹⁶

¹³ Thomsen, p. 3.

¹⁴ Cited in Thomsen, p. 139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Our paradigm of constellation constructed around Proust and China through translation, intertext, and transcultural dialogue hopes to become an effective model for other specialist and comparatist works to follow. For example, its discursive framework could immediately be adapted to support the study of many of Proust's fellow modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. What about the translation and reception of their works in China? Are they more of the same as Proust's? Have their respective thematic foci and stylistic innovations in a different language unleashed Chinese and Chinese diasporic writers' creative imaginations differently? Comparing and contrasting the reception of these often associated European modernist authors in a different cultural context such as China would open up another fascinating area of scholarly enquiry. One particular strength of my morphological approach to this 'Proustian constellation' lies in its fruitful and continuous methodological as well as epistemic negotiation between the more traditional critical approach built on historical or philological relations among literary texts *and* the more 'speculative' planetary criticism, advocated by Wai Chee Dimock and Gayatri Spivak, which emphasizes the global readership and the randomizing, extraterritorial morphology of literature that outlive the 'finite scope of the nation' and disrupt 'dimensions of space and time' and the 'synchronic plane of the geopolitical map'.¹⁷

Proust disliked C. K. Scott Moncrieff's English translation of '*A la recherche du temps perdu*' as '*Remembrance of Things Past*' (a phrase borrowed from Shakespeare), as he criticised in

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 139-142.

¹⁷ These expressions are taken from Dimock's article. Dimock clarifies: 'a literary text becomes a new semantic template, a new form of the legible, each time it crosses a national border. Global transit extends, triangulates, and transforms its meaning'. She further characterizes the act of reading as 'a global process of extension, elaboration, and randomization' which 'turns literature into the collective life of the planet'. See Wai Chee Dimock, 'Literature for the Planet', *PMLA*, 116.1 (2001), 173-188. For planetary criticism, see also Spivak's seminal work, *Death of a Discipline*.

his correspondence: 'cela détruit le titre'.¹⁸ Had he lived long enough to know the Chinese title for his novel, Proust would in all likelihood have disapproved of 'Zhuiyi sishui nianhua' ('pursuing the memory of time/years as water/river', 追忆似水年华). However, he would certainly have been intrigued to observe how his own 'sensation du temps écoulé'¹⁹ is metamorphosed into *une tradition du temps 'fluviale'*,²⁰ and is expressed and reformulated both in French and Chinese – a logographic language that was even more foreign to him than English. Proust in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* famously concluded: 'les beaux livres sont écrits dans une sorte de langue étrangère. Sous chaque mot chacun de nous met son sens ou du moins son image qui est souvent un contresens. Mais dans les beaux livres, tous les contresens qu'on fait sont beaux'.²¹ This remark points sharply to a 'good' theory and practice of reading. It seems that there is something inherently 'strange' and 'foreign' in the literary language of great works which robustly invites readers to (mis)translate and (mis)interpret ('contresens') according to their sensitivity and experience. 'Les beaux livres' like *La Recherche* are 'beaux', not for the sake of being susceptible to 'errors' of understanding. If one were to transpose Proust's statement from its original intralingual to our interlingual context, one could say that 'tous les contresens qu'on fait sont beaux' because such 'misinterpretations' open up cultural differences that call for creative negotiations and constant reciprocal actualizations of two traditions – a transcultural dialogue. *Contre-sens* is literally the way we engaged with Proust's work in this thesis, and the 'ensemble de rapports' between Proust and China, exhilarated by such 'contresens',

¹⁸ Proust, 'Lettre à Gaston Gallimard [Le jeudi 14 septembre 1922]', in *Correspondance XXI*, ed. by Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1993), p. 476.

¹⁹ Proust, *RTP IV*, p. 535.

²⁰ The expression echoes the exchange of words between Véronique and Tianyi in *Le Dit*: "'Tu es un vrai 'fluvial'!" – Comment ne le serais-je pas, en bon Chinois que je suis'. Cheng, *Le Dit*, p. 268.

²¹ Proust, *Sainte-Beuve*, pp. 297-298.

offers a beguiling 'progression de beauté'.²² A hundred years after the publication of *Du côté de chez Swann*, Proust's work will no doubt continue to effect such intercultural transaction that exemplifies our sense of tradition and its becoming.

²² *Ibid.* 298. I have appropriated Proust's own words.

Bibliography

Works by Proust and Their Translations:

Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit (Audio-CD), read by Maria Wimmer. Universal Music. 2010.

Proust, Marcel, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. by J.-Y. Tadié, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1987-9).

—, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. by Pierre Clarac and André Ferré, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1954).

—, *Jean Santeuil* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952).

—, *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (Gallimard, 1954).

—, 'Lettre à Gaston Gallimard [Le jeudi 14 septembre 1922]', in *Correspondance XXI*, ed. by Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1993), p. 475-476.

—, 'Lettre à Paul Souday [10 novembre 1919]', in *Correspondance XVIII*, ed. by Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1990).

—, *Le Temps retrouvé*, ed. by Bernard Brun (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1986).

—, *The Way by Swann's*, trans. by Lydia Davies, ed. by Christopher Prendergast (London: Penguin, 2003).

Pulusite, Masai'er, *Bo Shengbofu (Contre Sainte-Beuve, 驳圣伯夫)*, trans. by WANG Daoqian (Nanchang: Baihuazhou chubanshe, 1992).

—, *Pulusite jingxuanji (An Anthology of Proust's Works, 普鲁斯特精选集)*, trans. by SHEN Zhiming (Jinan: Shandong wenyi chubanshe, 1999).

—, *Zhuiyi shishui nianhua (A la recherche du temps perdu, 追忆似水年华)*, trans. by LI Hengji, XU Jizeng, GUI Yufang, YUAN Shuren, PAN Lizhen, XU Yuanchong, XU Jun, YANG Songhe, ZHOU Kexi, ZHANG Xiaolu, ZHANG Yinde, LIU Fang, LU Binghui, XU Hejin, and ZHOU Guoqiang, 3 vols [7 vols] (Nanjing: Yilin chubanshe, 2008 [1989-1991]).

—, *Zhuiyi shishui nianhua. Jinghuaben (A la recherche du temps perdu. Essential Selection, 追忆逝水年华, 精华本)*, trans. by SHEN Zhiming (Shanghai: Yiwen, 2012[1992]).

(Xu's Translation)

Pulusite, Masai'er, *Gai'ermangte Nabian (Le Côté de Guermantes, 盖尔芒特那边)*, trans. by Xu Hejin (Nanjing: Yilin, 2011).

——, *Zai huaji shaonü qianying xia* (*A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 在花季少女倩影下), trans. By Xu Hejin (Nanjing: Yilin, 2010).

——, *Zai Siwanjia zhebian* (*Du côté de chez Swann*, 在斯万家这边), by trans. by Xu Hejin (Nanjing: Yilin, 2010[2004]).

(Zhou's Translation)

Pulusite, Masai'er, *Nüqiu* (*La Prisonnière*, 女囚), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Shanghai : East China Normal University Press, 2012).

——, *Qu Siwanjia nabian* (*Du côté de chez Swann*, 去斯万家那边), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2012[2004]).

——, *Zai shaonü huaying xia* (*A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, 在少女花影下), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2012[2010]).

——, *Zhuixun shiqu de shiguang* (*Qu Siwanjia nabian*) (*A la recherche du temps perdu* (*Du Côté de chez Swann*), 追寻逝去的时光(去斯万家那边)) (Abridged Translation), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2009).

——, *Zhuixun shiqu de shiguang* (*A la recherche du temps perdu*, 追寻逝去的时光), comic book adaptation by Stéphane Heuet (1998), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2006).

Other Primary Sources:

'Stéphane Heuet et Daniel Mesguich' on *Radio Française Internationale* (RIF) broadcasted on 5 February 2014. <<http://www.rfi.fr/emission/20140205-2-stephane-heuet-daniel-mesguich>> [accessed on 3 December 2014].

Cheng, Baoyi, *Tianyi yan*, trans. by YANG Nianxi (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2009, [2003]).

Cheng, François, *Cinq méditations sur la beauté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008 [2006]).

——, *Le Dit de Tianyi* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

——, *L'Éternité n'est pas de trop* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002).

——, *Le Dialogue: Une passion pour la langue française* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002), Kindle Ebook.

——, 'Discours de réception de François Cheng' <<http://www.academie-francaise.fr/discours-de-reception-de-francois-cheng>> [accessed 8 December 2014].

- , 'La Double Culture d'un Académicien', in *Débats francophones. Recueil des conférences et actes 2000-2005*, ed. by Lise et Paul Sabourin (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2005), pp. 357-373.
- , *Vide et plein: le langage pictural chinois* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).
- , 'Zhongwenban zixu' ('Preface for the Chinese Translation', 中文版自序), in *Tianyi yan*, trans. by YANG Lianxi (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2009[2003]), pp. 1-4.
- , 'Zhongxi hebi: chuangzaoxing de ronghe – fang Cheng Baoyi xiansheng' ('Chinese-West: Creative Amalgamation – Interviewing Mr. François Cheng', 中西合璧: 创造性地融合——访程抱一先生), in *Tianyi yan*, pp. 303-318.
- Lin, Zhou, *Shengming de baidu (The Ferry of Life, 生命的摆渡)* (Shenzhen: Haitian chubanshe, 1998).
- Luo, Dagang, 'Shilun Zhuiyi sishui nianhua' ('An Attempted Critical Introduction to *La Recherche*', 试论《追忆似水年华》), in *Zhuiyi sishui nianhua*, vol. 1, pp. 19-30.
- Maurois, André, 'Préface', in *A la recherche du temps perdu I*, ed. by Pierre Clarac and André Ferré (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), pp. xiii-xv.
- Milly, Jean, 'Préface', in *Du côté de chez Swann* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), pp. 9-39.
- Prendergast, Christopher, 'General Editor's Preface', in *The Way by Swann's*, trans. by Lydia Davies (London: Penguin, 2002), pp. vii-xxi.
- Wang, Xiaobo, 'East Palace, West Palace', in *Wang in Love and Bondage*, trad. by Hongling Zhang and Jason Sommer (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), pp. 119-155.
- , 'Si shui liu nian' ('Fleeting Years as Water', 似水流年), in *Huangjin shidai (Golden Age, 黄金时代)* (Beijing: Beijing shiyue wenyi chubanshe, 2011), pp. 129-98.
- , *Wo de jingshen jiyuan (My Spiritual Home, 我的精神家园)* (Beijing: Wenhua wenyi chubanshe, 1997).
- Wei, Hui, *Shanghai Baby*, trans. by Bruce Humes (London: Robinson, 2001). (English)
- , *Shanghai Baby*, trans. by Cora Whist (Paris: Philippe Picquier, 2001). (French)
- , 'Yinghan bu tiaowu' ('Tough Guys Don't Dance', 硬汉不跳舞), in *Wei Hui zuopin quanbian* (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2000), pp. 631-670.
- , 'Yuwang shouqiang' ('The Pistol of Desire', 欲望手枪), in *Wei Hui zuopin quanbian (The Complete Works of Wei Hui)* (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2000), pp. 315-390.
- , 'Zhi jiezhi' ('Paper Rings', 纸戒指), in *Wei Hui zuopin quanji (The Complete Works of Wei Hui, 卫慧作品全集)* (Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 2000), pp. 55-79.

- Yu, Hua, *Cries in the Drizzle*, trans. by Allan Hepburn Barr (New York: Anchor Books, 2007).
- , *Cris dans la bruine*, trans. by Jacqueline Guyvallet (Paris: Actes Sud, 2003).
- , ‘Hanwenban zixu’ (‘Preface for the Korean Translation’, 韩文版自序), in *Zai xiyuzhong huhan* (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 2011[1991]), pp. 6-8.
- , ‘Yidaliwen ban zixu’ (‘Preface for the Italian Translation’, 意大利文版自序), in *Zai xiyuzhong huhan* (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 2011[1991]), pp. 4-5.
- , *Shuohua* (Talks, 说话) (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 2002).
- , *Zai xiyu zhong huhan* (在细雨中呼喊) (Beijing: Zuoja chubanshe, 2011[1991]).
- Zhou Kexi, ‘Abridgement Notice of *Du côté de chez Swann*’, in *Zhuixun shiqu de shiguang* (*A la recherche du temps perdu*) (Abridged edition) (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 2009).
- , ‘Yixu’ (‘Preface to the Translation’, 译序), in *Zhuixun shiqu de shiguang* (*A la recherche du temps perdu*, 追寻逝去的时光) (comic book adaptation by Stéphane Heuet), trans. by Zhou Kexi (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 2006), p. 1.

Secondary Sources:

- Albouy, Pierre, *Mythes et mythologies dans la littérature française* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969).
- , ‘Quelques images et structures mythiques dans *La recherche du temps perdu*’, in *Mythographies* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1976), pp. 334-352.
- Allan, Sarah, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997).
- Apter, Emily, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- Aubert, Nathalie, ‘La peinture hollandaise de notre mémoire’, in *Marcel Proust Aujourd’hui 8: Proust et la Hollande*, ed. by Sjef Houppermans, Manet van Monfrans, and Annelies Schulte Nordholt (New York: Edition Rodopi, 2011), pp. 131-47.
- , *Proust: La Traduction du sensible* (Oxford: Legenda, 2002).
- Bales, Richard, ‘Proust and the fine arts’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007[2001]), pp. 183-99.
- , *Proust and the Middle Ages* (Genève: Droz, 1975).
- Barthes, Roland, *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984).
- , *Carnet du voyage en Chine*, ed. by Anne Herschberg Pierrot (Paris: Christian Bourgois/Imec, 2009).
- , *L’Empire des signes* (Genève: A. Skira, 1970).

- , *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture suivi de Nouveaux Essais critiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).
- Bassnett, Susan, 'Influence and Intertextuality: A Reappraisal', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43.2 (2007), 134-146.
- Berman, Antoine, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger: culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).
- Bersani, Leo, *Homos* (Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Beugnet, Martine and Marion Schmid, *Proust at the Movies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).
- Bizub, Edward, *La Vénise intérieure* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1991).
- Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
- Bouillaguet, Annick, *L'Écriture imitative: Pastiche, Parodie, Collage* (Paris: Nathan, 1996).
- , *Marcel Proust: Le Jeu intertextuel* (Paris: Edition du Titre, 1990).
- Bowie, Malcolm, *Proust Among the Stars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
- Brami, Joseph, *Lecteurs de Proust au XX^e siècle et au début du XXI^e siècle*, 2 vols. (Caen: Lettres modernes Minard, 2010).
- Brecht, Bertolt, 'Alienation Effect in Chinese Acting (1936)', trans. by John Willett, in *Theatre in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology*, ed. by David Krasner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 178-184.
- Bucknall, Barbara J., 'Mysticism', in *The Religion of Art in Proust* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1969).
- Bush, Christopher, 'The Other of the Other?: Cultural Studies, Theory, and the Location of the Modernist Signifier', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 42.2 (2005), 162-80.
- Cattaui, Georges, *Marcel Proust: Proust et son temps; Proust et le temps* (Paris: Julliard, 1952).
- Chaudier, Stéphane, *Proust et le langage religieux: la cathédrale profane* (Paris: Champion, 2004).
- Chinese Classics: Tao Te Ching*, tr. by D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989[1963]).
- Chirila, Ileana Daniela, 'La Littérature transculturelle franco-chinoise ou comment réinventer la République des Lettres', in *Traits chinois / lignes francophones*, edited by Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude (Montréal: Presse de l'Université de Montréal, 2012), pp. 67-83.
- Chou, Wah-shan, *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (New York, London, Oxford: The Haworth Press).

- Coleman, Elliott, *The Golden Angel, Papers on Proust* (New York: C. Taylor, 1954).
- Colonna, Vincent. *L'autofiction, essai sur la fictionalisation de soi en littérature*. Linguistics. Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), 1989. <<https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00006609>> [accessed on 07 November 2014].
- Compagnon, Antoine, *Les Cinq paradoxes de la modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).
- , *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).
- Crowther, Paul, 'The Aesthetic: From Experience to Art', in *Aesthetic Experience*, ed. by Adele Tomlin and Richard Shusterman (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 31-44.
- Danius, Sara, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).
- DeFrancis, John, *The Chinese Language: Facts and Fantasy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984).
- Deleuze, Gilles, 'Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty', in *Venus in Furs*, trad. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1989), p. 9-142.
- , *Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976).
- Derrida, dir. by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman (Zeitgeist Films; Jane Doe Films, 2002).
- Derrida, Jacques, 'La différence', in *Théorie d'ensemble* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), pp. 41-66.
- , *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967).
- D'Haen, Theo, 'Antique Lands, New Worlds? Comparative Literature, Intertextuality, Translation', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 43.2 (2007), 108-120.
- Dimock, Wai Chee, 'A Theory of Resonance', *PMLA*, 112.5 (1997), pp. 1060-1071.
- , 'Literature for the Planet', *PMLA*, 116.1 (2001), 173-188.
- Eagleton, Terry, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
- East Palace, West Palace (Donggong xigong, 东宫西宫)*, dir. Zhang Yuan (Fortissimo Films, 1996).
- Edward B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1871).
- Eells-Ogée, Emily, 'Introduction', in *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), pp. 11-51.
- Eliot, T. S., 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. Second Edition*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company), pp.955-961.

- Enthoven, Jean-Paul and Raphaël Enthoven, 'Amour', in *Dictionnaire amoureux de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Grasset, 2013), Kindle book.
- Field, Andrew and Jeroen Gronewegen, 'Explosive Acts: Beijing's Punk Rock Scene in the Postmodern World of 2007', in *Postmodern China*, ed. by Jens Damm and Andreas Steen (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), pp. 8-26.
- Finch, Alison, 'Love, Sexuality and Friendship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. by Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007[2001]), pp. 167-182.
- Foucault, Michel, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
- Fraisse, Luc, 'Le Dit de Tianyi, palimpseste de *La Recherche*?', in *La Petite Musique du style: Proust et ses sources littéraires* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010), pp. 633-639.
- , *Proust et le japonisme* (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 1997).
- Fravalo-Tane, Pascale, *A la recherche du temps perdu en France et en Allemagne (1913-1958): 'Dans une sorte de langue étrangère ...'* (Paris: Champion, 2008).
- Freed-Thall, Hannah, 'Zut, zut, zut: Aesthetic Disorientation in Proust', *Modern Language Notes*, 124.4 (2009), 868-900.
- Froula, Christine, 'Proust's China', in *Modernism and the Orient*, ed. by Zhaoming Qian (Orleans: University of New Orleans Press, 2012), pp. 74-109.
- Fülöp, Erika, *Proust, the One, and the Many: Identity and Difference in A la recherche du temps perdu* (London: Legenda, 2012).
- Furth, Charlotte, 'Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth Century China', *Late Imperial China*, 9.2 (1988), 1-30.
- Gao, Xingjian, *Le Témoignage de la littérature* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).
- Genette, Gérard, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).
- , *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).
- Gray, Margaret, *Postmodern Proust* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).
- Guérin, J., 'Théâtre', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, ed. by Annick Bouillaguet and Bryan Rogers (Paris: Champion, 2004), pp. 997-1000.
- Gulik, R. H. van, *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961).
- Guo, Guihua, 'Lun Zai Siwan jia nabian zhong de shui yixiang' ('Discussing the Image of Water in *Du côté de chez Swann*', 论《在斯万家那边》中的水意象), *Journal of Xinxiang University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 25.1 (2011), 102-104.
- Han, Hulin, 'Zheli you yipian pinghe de jingtu: ji *Zhuyi sishui nianhua* de yizhemen' ('Here is a peaceful land: A note on *La Recherche*'s translators', 这里有一片净土——记《追

- 忆似水年华》的译者们). *China Publishing Journal* (*Zhongguo chuban*, 中国出版), 4 (1990), 60-65.
- Happy Together* (*Chunguang zhaxie*, 春光乍泄), dir. by Wong Kar-wai (Kino International, 1997).
- Hassine, J., 'Bergotte', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, ed. by Annick Bouillaguet and Bryan Rogers (Paris: Champion, 2004), pp. 130-132.
- Henri, Anne, *Marcel Proust: Théories pour une esthétique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1981).
- Hinsch, Bret, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- Hokenson, Jan Walsh, 'Proust: From a Japoniste Cup of Tea', in *Japan, France, and East-West Aesthetics: French Literature, 1867-2000* (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), pp. 204-224.
- Huang, Hong, 'Proust retrouvé', in *D'après Proust*, ed. by Philippe Forest and Stéphane Audeguy (Paris : Nouvelle Revue Française, 2013), pp. 294-304.
- Hughes, Alex, *France/China: Intercultural Imaginings* (London: Legenda, 2007). Hughes, Edward J., *Proust, Class, and Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Jauss, Hans Robert, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trad. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1982 [1978]). Jones, Andrew F., *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).
- Karpeles, Eric, *Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to In Search of Lost Time* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008).
- Kellman, G. Steven, *Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).
- Koake, Takeshi (小明雄), *Zhongguo tongxing'ai shilu* (*The History of Chinese Homosexual Love*, 中国同性恋史录) (Hong Kong: Fenhong sanjiao chubanshe, 1984).
- Kristeva, Julia, *Des Chinoises* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1974).
- Ladenson, Elizabeth, 'Sexuality', in *Proust in Context*, ed. Adam Watt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 155-122.
- , *Proust's Lesbianism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).
- Landy, Joshua, *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- Lane, Philippe, *French Scientific and Cultural Diplomacy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 54–55.
- Laozi: *Daodejing*, tr. by Edmund Ryden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

- Le Roux-Kieken, Aude, *Imaginaire et écriture de la mort dans l'œuvre de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Champion, 2005).
- Leriché, F., 'Musique', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, ed. by Annick Bouillaguet and Bryan Rogers (Paris: Champion, 2006), pp. 664-66.
- Li, Chenyang, 'The Confucian Ideal of Harmony', *Philosophy East and West*, 56.4 (2006), 583-603. Li, Yinhe and Wang Xiaobo, *Tamen de shijie (Their World, 他们的世界)* (Taiyuan: Shanxi People's Press, 1992). Li, Yinhe, *Nüelien yawenhua (The Subculture of Sodomasochism, 虐恋亚文化)* (Beijing: Jinri zhongguo chubanshe, 1998).
- , *Tongxinglian yawenhua (The Subculture of Homosexuality, 同性恋亚文化)* (Hohhot: Inner Mongolia University Press, 2009).
- , *Zhongguo nüxing de ganqing yu xing (Chinese Women's Feelings and Sexuality, 中国女性的感情与性)* (Beijing: Jinri zhongguo chubanshe, 1998).
- Liu, Mingjiu, 'Pulusite Chuanqi' ('Proust's Legend', 普鲁斯特传奇), in *Zhuiyi shishuinianhua (jinghua ben) (In Search of Lost Time. An Essential Selection)*, trans. by Shen Zhiming (Shanghai: Yiwén, 2013[1990]), pp. 1-15.
- Lovell, Julia, 'Finding a Place: Mainland Chinese Fiction in the 2000's', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71 (2012), 7-32.
- , 'The Key to China', *Prospect* 192 (February 2012)
<http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/the-key-to-china-literary-magazines-new-chinese-fiction-pathlight-chutzpah> [accessed 26 November 2014].
- Lozinsky, Elena, *L'Intertexte fin-de-siècle dans A la recherche du temps perdu de Marcel Proust: Les Carafes dans la Vivonne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2013).
- Lu, Sheldon, H., *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).
- , 'Popular Culture and Body Politics: Beauty Writers in Contemporary China', *Modern Language Quarterly* 69.1 (2008): 167-185.
- Lucille Cairns, 'Homosexuality and Lesbianism in Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe*', *French Studies* 51.1 (1997): 43-57.
- Magazine littéraire*, March 2004.
- Mair, Victor, *T'ang Transformation Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- Mendelson, David, *Le Verre et les objets de verre dans l'univers imaginaire de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Librairie J. Corti, 1968).
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).
- Miguet-Ollagnier, Marie, *La Mythologie de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1982).

- Miner, Earl. *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- Mommaers, Paul. *Marcel Proust. Esthétique et mystique: une lecture d'A la recherche du temps perdu*. (Paris: Cerf, 2010).
- Jean Milly, 'La Chine rattrape le temps perdu', *Libération*, 26 December 1991.
- Moretti, Franco, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).
- Niu, Jingfan, *Duihua yu ronghe: Cheng Baoyi de chuanguozuo shijian yanjiu* ('Dialogue and Fusion: Research on François Cheng's Creative Practice', 对话与融合程抱一创作实践研究) (Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Science Press, 2008).
- Orr, Mary, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).
- Plottel, J. P., 'Introduction', in *Intertextuality: New Perspectives in Criticism*, ed. by Jeanne Pariser Plottel and Hanna Kurz Charney (New York: New York Library Forum, 1978), pp. xi-xx.
- Pothast, Ulrich, *The Metaphysical Vision: Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Art and Life and Samuel Beckett's Own Way to Make Use of It* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).
- Poulet, Georges, *L'Espace proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).
- Qian, Linsen, 'Zhongxifang zhexue mingyun de lishi yuhe – Cheng Baoyi: Tianyiyan ji qita' ('The Historical Encounter of Destiny between Chinese and Western Philosophies – François Cheng and Others', 中西方哲学命运的历史遇合 – 程抱一及其他), *Kua wenhua duihua* (*Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, 跨文化研究), 3 (1999), 2-14.
- Rabut, Isabelle, 'Yu Hua', *Magazine littéraire* (March 2004).
- Reille, J. -F., *Proust: Le Temps du désir* (Paris: Éditions français réunis, 1979).
- Richard, Jean-Pierre, *Proust et le monde sensible* (Paris: Seuil, 1976).
- Rivers, J. E., 'The Myth and Science of Homosexuality in *A la recherche du temps perdu*', in *Homosexualities and French Literature*, ed. by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 262-78.
- Saylor, Douglas B., *The Sadomasochistic Homotext: Readings in Sade, Balzac and Proust* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).
- Schmid, Marion, 'The Birth and Development of *A la recherche*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Proust*, ed. by Richard Bales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 58-73.
- , 'Eulenburg (Philippe, prince de) [1847-1921]', in *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, ed. by Annick Bouillaguet and Bryan Rogers (Paris: Champion, 2004), pp. 363-64.

- , 'Proust at the Ballet: Literature and Dance in Dialogue'. *French Studies* 2(2013), 184-98.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, *The World as Will and Representation I*, trans. by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966).
- Silvester, Rosalind and Guillaume Thouroude, 'Introduction', in *Traits chinois / lignes francophones*, ed. by Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2012), pp. 9-24.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
- Sun, Kun, 'The Study on C-E & E-C Translation and Punctuation', in *Zhongguo yinghanyu bijiao yanjiuhui diqici quanguo xueshu yantao lunwenji (Collected Essays from the Seventh National Conference of The Society for English-Chinese Comparative Studies)*, pp. 1-10.
- Suzuki, Junji, *Proust et le japonisme* (Lille: ANRT, 1997).
- Tadié, Jean-Yves, *Marcel Proust* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).
- , *Proust et le roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).
- Tang, Xiaobing, *Chinese Modern: The Heroic and the Quotidian* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2000).
- Taub, Liba, *Ancient Meteorology* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003).
- The Analects*, IX.17, translated by D. C. Lau (London: Penguin, 1979).
- The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trad. by Burton Watson, <<http://terebess.hu/english/chuangtzu.html>> (Section Two) [accessed on 12th January 2015].
- Thomsen, Mads Rosendahl, *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures* (London: Continuum, 2008).
- Topping, Margaret, *Proust's Gods* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- , *Supernatural Proust: Myth and Metaphor in A la recherche du temps perdu* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).
- Traits chinois / lignes francophones: Écriture, images, cultures*, ed. by Rosalind Silvester and Guillaume Thouroude (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2012).
- Tu, Weiqun, 'Les possibilités du chinois contemporain face à la richesse langagière proustienne', presented at the conference entitled 'Comment traduire Proust? Problématiques traductologiques et réflexions théoriques' (unpublished conference proceedings. SEPTET & CNRS. Paris. 28-29 November 2013).

- , 'A Review and Analysis of Proust Studies in China over the Past 60 Years', *Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 49.3 (2012), 91-100.
- , 'Wenxue jiezu de yongheng shengming: Guanyu Zhuiyi sishui nianhua de liangge zhongyiben' ('The Eternal Life of Great Literary Work: About the Two Chinese Translations of *In Search of Lost Time*', 文学杰作的永恒生命: 关于《追忆》的两个中译本), *Wenyi yanjiu (Research on Art and Literature, 文艺研究)*, 12 (2010), 138-148.
- , '(Xingyü) daocuo de wenxue jiazhi' ('The Literary Values of (Sexual) Inversion', (性欲) 倒错的文学价值) in *Pulusite pingzhuan (Proust: A Critical Biography, 普鲁斯特评传)* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Wenyi Chubanshe, 1999), pp. 114-15.
- , *Yanguang de jiaozhi: zai Cao Xueqin yu Masai'er Pulusite zhijian (Interweaving the Visions: Between Qinxue Cao and Marcel Proust, 眼光的交织: 在曹雪芹与马塞尔·普鲁斯特之间)* (Nanjing: Yilin, 2014).
- Vallée, Claude, *La Féerie de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1958).
- Venuti, Lawrence, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).
- Wang, Hongjian, *Performing Perversion: Decadence in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature* (doctoral thesis, University of California, Riverside) (ProQuest LLC, 2012).
- Wang, Jiaxin, 'Fanyi wenxue, fanyi, fanyiti' ('Literature in Translation, Translation, Translationese', 翻译文学, 翻译, 翻译体), *Dangdai zuojia pinglun (Contemporary Chinese Writers Criticism, 当代中国作家批评)*, 2 (2013), 129-137.
- Wang, Shicheng, *Xiangsi ersheng: Yu Hua (向死而生: 余华)* (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 2005).
- Welsch, Wolfgang, 'Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today', in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. by Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194-213.
- Wei Xing Shi Guan Zhai Zhu (唯性史观斋主), *Zhongguo tongxing'ai mishi (The Secret History of Chinese Homosexual Love, 中国同性恋秘史)* (Hong Kong: Yuzhou chubanshe, 1964).
- Wood, Michael, 'Translations', in *Marcel Proust in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 230-240.
- Wu, Liang, 'Re-memembering the Cultural Revolution', in *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century: A Critical Survey*, ed. by Pang-Yuan Chi, David Der-wei Wang (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 124-136.
- Xing, Guoxin, 'Hu Jintao's Political Thinking and Legitimacy Building: A Post-Marxist Perspective', *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 34.4 (2009): 213-226.

- Xu, Jun, 'Sentence and Translation: Accessing the Chinese Translation of Long Sentences in *In Search of Lost Time*', *Waiyu yanjiu (Foreign Studies, 外国研究)*, 1 (1993), 9-16.
- , 'Translating Proust into Chinese: Retrospect and Reflection', *Chinese Translators Journal*, 1 (2007), 27-31.
- Xu, Hejin, 'La Traduction de *La Recherche en chinois*', *Bulletin Marcel Proust*, 42 (1992), 179-180.
- Xu, Yuanchong, 'Fanyi de zhexue' ('The Philosophy of Translation', 翻译的哲学), in *Wenxue yu fanyi (Literature and Translation, 文学与翻译)* 71-79.
- , 'Wenxue fanyi yu fanyiwenxu' ('Literary Translation and Translating Literature', 文学翻译与翻译文学), in *Wenxue yu fanyi* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2003), pp. 101-107.
- Zhang, Beichuan, *Tongxing'ai (same-sex love, 同性爱)* (Shandong: Shandong Science and Technology Press, 1994).
- Zhang, Hongling and Jason Sommer, 'Introduction', in *Wang in Love and Bondage: Three Novellas by Wang Xiaobo*, tran. by H. Zhang and J. Sommer (Albany: State University of New York, 2007), pp. iv-x.
- Zhang, Ning, 'Cheng Baoyi xiansheng yu ta de huojiang xiaoshuo *Tianyi yan*: yu Zhang Ning duihua' ('Mr. Cheng Baoyi and His Award-winning Novel *Tianyi yan*: Dialogue with Zhang Ning', 程抱一先生和他的获奖小说《天一言》: 与张宁对话) (2003) <<http://www.mayacafe.com/forum/topic1sp.php3?tkey=1065524624>> [accessed 9 December 2014].
- Zhang, Xudong, *Whither China: Intellectual Politics in Contemporary China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
- Zhang, Yinde, *Littérature Comparée. Perspectives chinoises* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008).
- , *Le Monde romanesque chinois au XX^e siècle. Modernité et identité* (Paris: Champion, 2003).
- Zhou, Kexi, 'Bali, yu Cheng Baoyi xutan' ('Paris, Chatting with François Cheng'; 巴黎, 与程抱一叙谈), in *Yi bian cao (译边草)* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2012), pp. 181-189.
- , 'Yu Chen Cun liao pulusite' ('Conversing with Chen Cun on Proust', 与陈村聊普鲁斯特), in *Yi Bian Cao (译边草)* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2012), pp. 203-222.